

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON GIRLS' DROPOUT IN TAJIKISTAN

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Community Perspectives on Girls' Dropout in Tajikistan

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ABSTRACT

Girl's dropout from school is problematic towards the overall wellbeing of those who drop out and to the society as whole. The goal of this study is to uncover some of the underlying factors that hinder girls from attending school in Tajikistan. For reference I used secondary data collected by UNICEF which was conducted to analyze the demand side of the drop out girls in Tajikistan. There were thirteen focus group discussions and seven individual interviews were conducted with the participants. The results from the analysis indicated that political and institutional factors, culture, poverty and school factors are the key elements for girls to drop out from school. Further, the intersections of these factors create discriminatory situation for girls to participate in schools. The result also identified the differences in perspective of participants on the importance of school for girls.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my beloved dad and mom whose love is a blessing from heaven. I am the luckiest girl in the world to have parents like you. To my lovely sisters who always believed in me, loved me and have supported me till this day.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

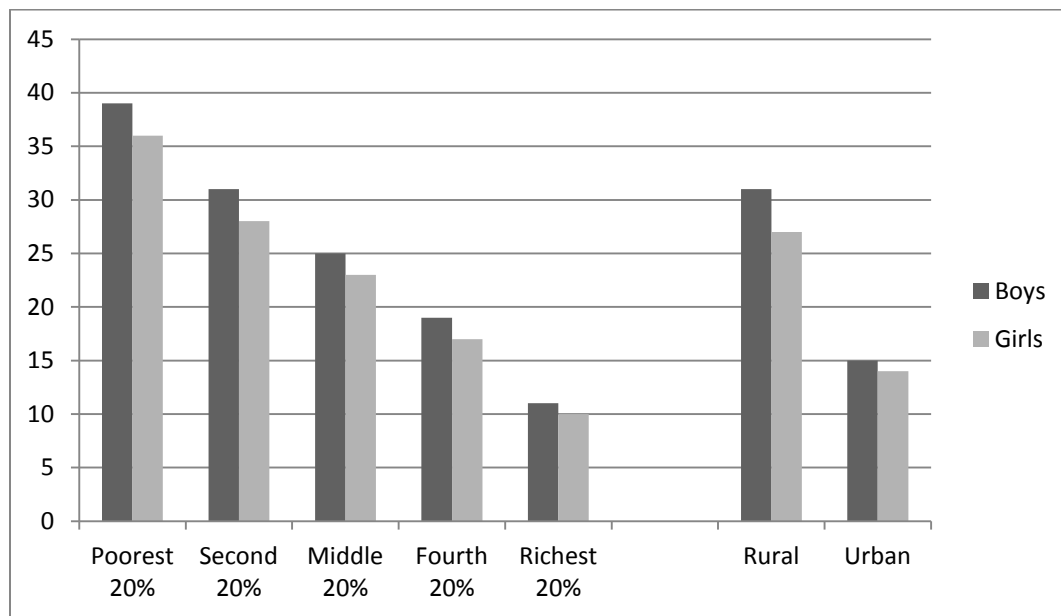
Education is a basic human right. It is vital towards the development of individuals and to the society as a whole. The education of girls has been repeatedly identified in international research as a key factor in the development of communities and countries (UNICEF, 2007). Further, education for girls is important towards the fulfillment of other rights as well as to gain socioeconomic status in society (DFID, 2005). While much progress has been made by countries worldwide to increase girls' educational participation yet they continue to face many obstacles that erode their educational opportunity (Wilson, 2011).

One of the goals of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) was to achieve gender parity in education by 2005 but more than 75 countries failed to achieve it (DFID, 2005). A joint report by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in 2011 estimated that out of 72 million primary school-age children that were out of school, 54 percent were girls only. Despite of the fact that children were starting primary school in greater numbers, there were many of them dropping out at the same time (Sabates, Akyeampong, Westbrook & Hunt, 2010). A report by UIS (2011) showed that worldwide there are 19 percent of the children that dropped out. Further, there are 51 percent of them that are expected never to enter school while 30 percent are expected to enroll in future (UIS, 2011).

Children remain out of school for a number of reasons such as lack of income, poverty, child labor, religion, gender, conflict and natural disasters, location, migration etc. (UIS, 2011). According to UIS (2011), "multiple disparities often intersect with each other, resulting in complex and mutually reinforcing patterns of disadvantage that erect barriers to schooling and erode educational opportunities" (p. 2). As Chitrakar (2009) maintains that "cultural and social

beliefs and practices interface with each other to form multiple and overlapping disparities that exclude girls from their right to education” (p.3).

When trying to understand why some groups have power and why others are void of it I reference Collins (1990) *matrix of domination*- which is the organization of power in society based on the intersecting oppression and *intersectionality*-which is a way of understanding social location based on the intersection of race, class, gender, age etc. (p.299). Collins is suggesting that a person/group position as privilege or oppressed comes with the intersection of various social location such as gender, race, class etc. These social locations create understanding of how we view ourselves and others and simultaneously reflect our opinion of others and society. Also, the interactions between various forms of oppression culminates into domination at three levels; personal, cultural and institutional (Collins, 1990).



Source: United Nation: The Millennium development goals report 2010

Figure 1 Out of school children by wealth quintile and area of residence, girls and boys, 42 countries, 2000/2008 (Percentage)

Figure 1 shows the household data from 42 countries. It shows that in rural areas children are twice as likely to drop out as in urban areas. In both rural and urban areas, there are fewer

girls in comparison to boys attending school with a slight difference in urban area. Further, it shows that girls from the poorest twenty percent households are 3.5 times more likely to be out of school than girls from the richest households and boys four times more likely to be out of school as boys in the richest households. Thus, poverty affects both boys' and girls' education but if we see in each quintile girls' dropout rate is higher in comparison to boys. This certainly provides a ground for further analysis. Taking Collins argument on intersecting oppression girls' dropout is higher in comparison to boys as result of wealth status intersecting with their genders creating discriminating situation for them to participate in education.

Disparities in education continue to be higher in Central Asia but there are some transition countries in Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) where access to education is not universal (UNICEF, 2007). Tajikistan is one such country where access to education at the primary and secondary level is very low and gender disparity persists in education (UNICEF, 2007; Falkingham, 2000). In Tajikistan, preschool enrollment rate is at 7 percent and average net enrollment rate for secondary school is at 80 percent with 20 percent children remaining out of school (UNICEF, 2007). Disparities in access to education for both boys and girls can be perceived from the attendance and the dropout rate. Further, in Tajikistan the gender disparity and access to education widens with each higher level. In primary level the enrollment rate is nearly equitable between genders with gender parity index of (GPI) 0.96 which increases to 0.86 as they reach secondary level which shows inequities in access to education for adolescent girls. However, there is a drastic fall by as much as 50 percent as the girls reach grade 10 and 11. Further, in higher education the GPI index level is 0.38 which shows a widening gender gap and underrepresentation of girl in higher educational level (UNICEF, 2010).

Tajikistan independence in 1991 with the collapse of Soviet Union brought massive challenges to the country's economic and social sphere. Further, civil war of 1992-1997 brought massive destruction of industries; agricultural, cotton and aluminum production and disruption of infrastructures (Briller, 2007; Shemyakina, 2006). Economic decline together with the severely damaged industries and infrastructures brought massive changes in the lives of people providing them with the status of one of the poorest people in the world (Arazmedova, 2011). Poverty remains high with 17 percent of the population living on less than a dollar a day and 53 percent living on less than 2 dollars a day (UNICEF, 2010). The independence of Tajikistan also brought transition in the gender roles in both the private and the public sphere with majority of girls and women withdrawn from the public sphere. Further, the destruction of industries that employed large proportion of women together with growing insecurity in the regions caused a sharp decline of girls and women participation in the public sphere (Falkingham, 2000).

I chose Tajikistan as an area of my study particular to my own background. I am from Nepal, a small mountainous and landlocked country with a geographical area of 147,181 square kilometer. The population of Nepal is 26.6 million as estimated by Population Census in 2011 (Ministry of Health and Population, New ERA & ICF International, 2012). Literacy rate for females stands at just 44.2 percent as opposed to 67.7 percent for males; according to Nepal's Ministry of Education (UNICEF, 2009). According to Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS), absolute poverty in Nepal stands at 25.2 percent in 2010 (Sapkota, 2011). Further, the country is strongly embedded in traditional culture and practices that discriminate women and girls from the fulfillment many of their basic rights and education is one of them (Bista, 2004). Most of the parents residing in rural areas feel it is a waste of money to educate girls and they end up doing the household chores and early marriage (Chitrakar, 2009). As Bista (2004) maintains that

people attitude towards girls' education is not positive for the reason that investment upon girls' education will benefit their husband's family and not them. Gender discrimination is based on the social stratification of society based on the caste system which establishes certain groups as privileged and others marginalized. Being born in a marginalized group deprives members of many of their basic rights; if they are girls they are doubly victimized because of their gender (Chitrakar, 2009). Thus, poverty together with vast gender discrimination and social exclusion of groups is responsible for lack of participation of girls in schools. Other factors like school issues are also an important factor to determine the persistence of girls in school in Nepal.

When I think about girls from poor families and from in rural areas, I feel privilege to be born in a family that is educated and where girls are treated equally like boys. Had my parents not been able to encourage me and support me throughout my educational period I would not have been able to land up here in USA and pursuing my dreams at North Dakota State University (NDSU). This fact clearly denotes that financial ability together with parents' perspective is vital towards the educational participation of girls.

In regard to the above observation and experience in my home country I find many similarities between Nepal and Tajikistan. Both are small mountainous landlocked countries with periods of civil war at one point of time. Poverty is widespread and gender disparity continues to exist in education sector. Further, both the countries follow the traditional cultural practices. Following the similarities and experiences of my home country, I envision a similar situation in Tajikistan. Thus, the goal of my study was to find out if political factors, poverty, culture and school issues caused girls to drop out in Tajikistan as in Nepal. The study explored this by investigation of the effect of these factors individually on the dropout in rural areas of Tajikistan. The study also explored how the intersection between these factors create situation for girls to

drop out. Further, the study explored the how the differences in community members' perspectives can influence girls' participation in school. It is important to focus on these goals to identify in what ways these are creating barriers for girls' educational participation in order to increase their enrollment rate and retention.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of literature, which was conducted to explore the reasons for girls' lack of participation in school and dropouts. Relevant books, journals, articles and research papers were studied. The literature draws on the range of qualitative and quantitative studies done primarily to understand the reasons/factors that create barriers for girls to participate in school and dropouts. The literature review consists of cross countries findings that show the evidence of political and institutional factors, poverty, cultural and school factors effect on the drop out of girls from school.

2.1. Political and Institutional Factors

Political factors in terms of countries economic crisis, war, civil unrest are regarded as some of the challenges towards girls' educational participation. Nekatibeb (2002) maintains that political instability in terms of wars and conflicts have affected the education of children in Sudan, Angola and Liberia.

Armed conflict effect on schooling can be observed in four different ways. First, it reduces the return of children to school which later can stop them attending school either temporarily or permanently. Second, it reduces the resources in many households because of which many families are unable to send their children to school. Third, in certain communities' school buildings and facilities, and infrastructures (transportations) may be destroyed during the conflict because of which children have to attend school outside of the community. Fourth, violence and insecurity during and after the conflict may force many families to stop their children attending schools (Shemyakina, 2006).

Dominguez (2011) in a study of armed conflict on education in Mozambique used the household survey in order to indentify the individuals who were harmed by the conflict on the

basis of their age and duration of exposure to conflict. The study found that the conflict exposure prior to seven years of age and from seven to thirteen years of age reduced the chances of school enrollment at later stage. The study also found that destruction of infrastructure during the war affected the education enrollment for both boys and girls. However, war affected girls more than boys who were linked to household choice and risk management.

A study by Arkesh and Walque (2008) examined Rwanda genocide on school enrollment of children. The study used a cross sectional survey prior to genocide in 1992 and after genocide in 2000. It then contrasted the changes in schooling rate from the older cohorts. The study found that younger children exposed to genocide were less likely to attend school and complete their primary schooling. Furthermore, because of the conflict the living condition of most household became poor. This situation affected both boys' and girls' education. Further, children who belong to non-poor families and had high enrollment, their enrollment also fell down to those of girls from poor families and lower level of schooling after the genocide.

Exposure to conflict also reduces financial resources at home. In Indonesia, financial crisis of 1998 led many families to withdraw their children from school by sending them to work to maintain their current level of consumption. With the higher proportion of children and low spending capacities of poor households made families to choose older children to go to school who were close to finishing their school than the younger ones (Shemayikina, 2006).

2.2. Culture

In many countries of South Asia, the traditional practices have survived as a result of gender roles, religion and patriarchy that form social attitudes and practices negatively affecting girls' participation in schools. According to Chitrakar (2009), "Patriarchy and a preference for sons, combined with parental perceptions of the opportunity costs of investing in girls' education,

often seen as ‘watering a neighbor’s tree’, have become risk factors for girls’ education” (p.9).

Preference for son is one of the main reasons for girls’ lack of participation in schools. Girls are generally treated as a temporary member of the family and investing on their education is a waste of money as it will benefit their future families and not them (Chitrakar, 2009; Hunt, 2004).

Gendered division of labor within households is often seen as girls taking on housework and childcare duties which often exclude them from school. Class times often conflict with household or sibling care duties. Hours of daily sibling care, domestic and farm work reduces girls’ attendance contributing to underachievement and dropout (Das, 2010). Chi and Rao (2003) study on rural China study showed that although parents placed first priority over children education yet their attitude towards boys and girls work reflected gender stereotypes. In general although girls had an equal opportunity as boys in getting formal education yet after completion of their study parents expected boys to earn money by working outside while girls were expected to work near home as a dressmaker or hairdresser.

A study conducted by World Vision (2011) highlights on several case studies which show the families’ attitude over girls’ education. Sharmila, a fourteen year old girl dropped out of school after fifth grade to help her parents work at field despite of her willingness to study. Likewise Jyotimaya enjoys school very much but because of the load of housework she is unable to find time for her studies and she dropped out of school. Ita, fifteen year old, dropped out after third grade to looking after her siblings at home. Her sister got married early and her parents are now preparing her marriage by providing household skills. She has no one to encourage her and is hoping that after marriage she can study only if her husband gives her permission.

Chitrakar (2009) in his study of overcoming barriers to girls’ education in South Asia found a disparity in girls and boys enrollment to basic education. The study showed that the gender

disparity in education resulted from early marriage and household work which are thought to be as female roles. It is the patriarchal tradition which places values on son and neglect daughters as they the ones who has to be married off soon and engage in household work.

Bajracharya (2010) in the study of girls' education in South Asia investigates that in most developing countries schooling is regarded as an obstruction in their marriage. It was found that parents' perception over the outcome of schooling was related to greater decision making power for girls over their choice of spouse and career. Amin and Huq (2008) in the study of marriage consideration in sending girls to school in Bangladesh revealed that poor families make inferior marriage choices for their daughters in comparison to the wealthy family. Poor families in order to save on dowry choose grooms that are less educated while rich families choose grooms that are highly educated and also because they can afford higher dowry. So, poor families for this reason marry off their daughter soon once a suitable marriage partner is available while in wealthier families girls have opportunity to continue with their education up to higher level.

A study conducted by Nekatibeb (2002) on a case study of drop out girls in Africa showed that cultural practices along with poverty caused a barrier towards educational participation of girls. Most of the parents from the Muslim and Christian communities feared that education at school socializes children with westernized value as opposite to their traditional cultural practices and norms. The study also found that insecurity in schools forced parents to withdraw girls as they were afraid of the consequences (early pregnancy and risk of abduction) resulting from the lack of safe environment in schools.

2.3. Poverty

Lack of household income is one of the barriers for the persistence of girls in schools. There are number of studies that show a link between poverty and drop out from school. A longitudinal

study on school dropout in Bangladesh showed poverty as a reason for children to drop out from school. Further, cost of schooling in terms of direct and indirect cost increased the expenses of schooling and decreased the rate of children going to school. In Bangladesh, children who came from the poorer household lived below the poverty line of US \$ 0.50 a day in 2007 and were same in 2009. The studies found that household income together with education of parents were an important predictor for children to remain in schools (Sabates, Hossain & Lewin, 2010).

Hunt (2008) maintains that household work pattern determines the income available for various expenses at home. A study in Bangalore, India found that in most poor households which live on daily wages, the only way to supplement or increase income is by using the labor of their children for household work and work outside home. Thus, many children drop out from school for that reason alone (Sabates, Hossain & Lewin, 2010). Hunt (2008) also maintains that because of poverty many households rely on the labor of their children both in paid and unpaid work to supplement income at home. Such was the case in Ghana where enrollment is less and drop out of girls is high because of their need for household work.

In situation of lack of financial resources at home children are withdrawn from school to make them engage in paid work outside home. Children also perform household duties so that other members can free themselves from regular duties at home and supplement money by working outside (Hunt, 2008). Lack of financial resources at home also decreases the participation of children from school as a result of lack of income to pay for school fees and other school related expenses. Thus, families choose children to spend time for earning money rather than spending time for education (Sabates, Akyeampong, Westbrook & Hunt 2010).

According to Hunt (2008), “For children from poorer backgrounds in particular the pressure on them to withdraw from school increases as they get older, particularly as the opportunity cost

of their time increases” (p.8). Parents from poor families also weigh the opportunity cost of educating a son and a daughter. Chi and Rao (2003) study on rural China revealed that the first priority of the family members were on the education of children but during the shortage of money at home children’ education was given a second priority with expenses incurred primarily for other things.

Family structure also affects girls’ participation in school. A case study on girls drop out from school in Ghana increased in presence of siblings less than six years old at home. Also, it was found in a study in India that almost 50 percent of children drop out from school for the same reason and in Tanzania it ended up with girls missing classes, repetition and finally dropout (Hunt, 2008).

2.4. School Factors

Poor classroom facilities such as lack of desk, chair, teaching materials, chalks etc. and poor pedagogical methods create poor learning environment that results in lack of participation of girls in school (UNESCO, 1984). In many countries, even if the school exist the classroom facilities in school is unsatisfactory and such is the case in India. In India over 90 percent of the localities have their primary and secondary schools yet with dilapidated buildings and poor classroom facilities. Besides deficiencies in these areas, many schools in India do not have enough teachers in both primary and secondary schools. Further, the criteria for student promotion to higher level is based on passing annual examinations and failure to pass the examinations causes makes them repeat the same class. Thus, repetition of classes has caused many children to drop out from school (UNESCO, 1984).

Hunt (2008) provides a research report from University of Zambia (2003) where teachers’ lack of preparedness to classes, wrong teaching practices and inability in grading students

homework consistently have affected the children's' participation from schools. Poor classroom facilities and lack of instructional material is also another factor lack of participation. Nekatibeb (2002) in the study of female primary education in Ethiopia showed that lack of textbooks and instructional material was the reason for many students to drop out. In addition, teachers' absenteeism and long distance to school have caused dropouts. Chitrakar (2009) shows the similar case where girls' drop out was related to long distance to school in Bangladesh. Parents are afraid of the physical violence (sexual harassment and sexual assault) on their way to school especially when they have to cover a long distance. Hunt (2008) examined a case study from Peru which showed that teacher absence was generally observed in poor communities. In poor communities, the transportation facilities are weak which causes teacher to arrive school in time. Further, poor classroom facilities and lack of teaching materials decreased the motivation of teachers to teach students well.

Violence in school is another factor that erodes the educational participation of girls. Wilson (2011) maintains that violence occurs in the form of explicit gender violence which includes sexual abuse and harassment, rape, assault etc. and implicit gender violence in form of corporal punishments, bullying, verbal abuse etc. Sexual harassment by male teachers and boys has become common phenomenon in most schools in several countries in sub Saharan Africa. Wilson (2011) shows a case of sub Saharan African schools where girls are a victim of physical abuse and harassment in schools. In South Africa, girls of 14-17 years of age are sexually abused and harassed by teachers in exchange of passing them with good grades. Schools administrations do not take these issues seriously and often ignore it thus making unsafe environment for girls to continue with schooling. Bista (2004) analysis about school context revealed a physical and

psychological torture towards girls in form of corporal punishment and sexual harassment in absence of female teachers in schools.

The evidence of dropout from other countries showed that armed conflict destroyed most of the schools infrastructure and brought economic crisis in the country. Insecurity and criminal activity are also some of the outcomes of war. These factors led to drop out of children from school. Further, for lack of safety reason parents were not allowing girls to attend school which led to increasing drop out of girls from school in comparison to boys. School issues seemed to be more common around the travel and distance from home. Violence in school was the utmost thing that parents were afraid of. Also, quality of schooling in regard to lack of textbooks and lack of teachers were the main issues for most children for diminishing interest towards education. There is also a clear link between household poverty and lack of educational participation of girls that were evident from the studies done in South Asia and sub Saharan Africa. Further, poverty accompanied by gender roles creates more debilitating situation for girls to attend schools.

2.5. Community Differences

Community differences are perceived in terms of the community factors. In communities there is a varying availability of factors such as schools, culture, work opportunities that determine the participation of girls in school (Whitsel & Mehran, 2010). In some communities, all factors work equally affecting girls' educational participation while in others the dominancy of one factor over the others can be perceived.

Interactions take place between members or groups occupying certain position/status in a society. Further, their experiences and perspective of situation and events are reflected by the position/status they occupy in society. Collins (1990) writes that “the cultural context formed by

those experiences and ideas are shared with other individual or group which further shapes their individual biography” (p.228). Thus, there are differences in opinion and perspective among members of the society.

Collins (1990) writes that individual have different social location such as gender, class, race etc. and the intersection of these social locations further determines their position as privilege or oppressed, but not to forget that an individual or group that is oppressed in one context may be privilege in another. In her example, gender may place white women to a subordinate position to males but they may be occupying a privileged position when compared to African-American women because in the latter case their gender and race places them in an oppressed position in society. It is also important that white woman position as privilege also yields them the power of dominancy over the African-American women. Further, their position as privileged or oppressed also shapes their experiences and perspectives of the situation and events. Thus differences in opinion are justified.

Pierre Bourdieu (1989) introduced the concepts of *social space* to understand that when agents, groups or institutions come closer, they exhibit more similar properties and lesser common properties they are far (p.16). This means that when two persons (eg: - leaders, teachers, fathers, mothers etc.) of the same class come closer they tend to share common mental makeup which are often reflected in their perspectives and opinions about certain things. Further, Bourdieu (1989) *habitus* represents a “system of schemes of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices” (p.19). Taking this argument, habitus reflect perceptions both at the individual level and collective level. According to Bourdieu (1989), “there are always, in any society, conflicts between symbolic powers that aim at imposing the vision of legitimate divisions” (p.22). Collins (1990) agrees with Bourdieu on the

social institution reinforcing domination. Collins further maintains that “institutions expose individuals to a specialized thought representing the dominant group’s standpoint and interests” (p.228). This is particularly true in case of religious institution that maintains its authority and fulfills its interest through dominant class in society. For example, in patriarchal society the power is legitimized through male members in society.

Thus, Collins argues that it is necessary to understand that in community there are different groups/individual occupying different social locations. For example gender, as social location in terms of males and females which automatically yields them the position of privilege or oppressed. Females because of their gender are already oppressed in this case and further their interaction with class puts them in more oppressed position. Bourdieu (1989) further suggests that dominant social institution creates, reproduces and maintains the common sense knowledge of individual or group reflecting their ideology and perceptions of situation or events.

2.6. Research Questions

In view of the above background, the study has focused on the following questions:

- a. What are the factors that cause girls to drop out from school?
- b. What factors intersect with each other creating situations for families to withdraw girls from school?
- c. Why are community members’ perspectives different and how does this difference affect girls’ educational participation?

CHAPTER 3. OVERVIEW OF TAJIKISTAN

Tajikistan is a landlocked, mostly mountainous country in Central Asia. It borders Uzbekistan to the west and north, Kyrgyzstan to the north, China to the east and Afghanistan to the south (Shemyakina, 2006). The country is administratively divided into four regions- Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous region, Region of Republican Subordination (RRS), Sughd and Khatlon region (Briller, 2007). These regions are further divided into 58 districts. The ethnic composition consists of Tajiks (80 percent) followed by Uzbeks (15 percent), Russians, Kyrgyz and others all 5 percent (Country profile, 2007). The smallest of the five former Soviet republics of Central Asia, Tajikistan has an area of 143,100 square kilometers, of which 400 square kilometers is water (Country profile, 2007). Tajikistan is populated by approximately 7.3 million people in 2006 and almost 2.85 million of its inhabitants are under age 14 (Shemyikina, 2006).

The capital city Dushanbe lies in the RRS and is an important because of its aluminum industry and contains a sizable Uzbek minority. The Gharm region in RRS is to the east of Dushanbe and is a mountainous and agricultural region. The inhabitants are Sunni Muslim, also known as Gharmis, who are a very religious group in Tajikistan. To the southeast of Gharm lies Gorno-Badakshan region, which is covered by beautiful Pamir Mountains. This was the last area to be brought under Soviet control. The inhabitants of this region are Ismaili Muslim and are also known as Pamiris. They speak a different Iranian dialect distinct from the Tajik language. This ethnography of this region is very important as well as lack of economic development. There is an important town called Tavildara from where many people were displaced in 1996 as a result of fierce fighting which started sporadically in 1993. During 1930s and 1940s when Tajikistan was under the rule of Soviet Union, the people from this region were forced to settle down in southwestern Tajikistan in Kurgan Teppe, to increase the agriculture productivity for the region.

Gharmis and Pamiris remained as one of the minority population and were given the status of immigrants in that region. Because of their ethnic distinction many of the Gharmis and Pamiris became a target during the civil war and southwestern Tajikistan became one of the places of greatest violence outside of Dushanbe (Mclean & Greene, 1998).



Figure 2 Map of Tajikistan

3.1. Political and Institutional Factors

The political and institutional factors are defined in terms of political instability and economic transition following independence in 1991 and the civil war of 1992-1997. The effects of this are numerous however I am limiting its effect on poverty, culture, and school factors. Tajikistan was under Soviet rule for a period of 70 years and was the least developed in comparison to other FSU countries (Whitsel & Mehran, 2010; Shemyakina, 2006). Tajikistan was

the most rural in comparison to other newly independent countries in the Soviet Union. This is particularly because unlike other FSU countries, Tajikistan served as an agricultural producer of raw materials to the industries located in other FSU regions. This is one reason why Tajikistan after independence faced a major trouble in improving its economy and had the lowest standard of living among the newly Soviet Republic countries (Curtis, 1996). Soviets also brought many changes in Tajikistan particularly in the field of education and health sector. The most peculiar was the gender equality in education and providing employment for women (Curtis, 1996).

However, some of these changes that Soviet brought were not long lasting. The collapse of Soviet Union and independence of Tajikistan in 1991 brought massive economic decline in the country which resulted from the breakup of ties with the central government and other FSU countries. Tajikistan was heavily dependent upon the subsidies from Moscow and other FSU countries which ultimately disappeared after its independence (Curtis, 1996) As a result of this, Tajikistan faced disruption in two of its main industries; cotton growing and aluminum refining for which the region was famous for before its independence (Shemyakina, 2006).

Tajikistan was struggling to pull up its economy when suddenly the country faced the most devastating civil war from 1992-1997 which led to massive destruction of social and human capital (Briller, 2007; Shemyakina, 2006). Tajikistan's cities grew but the societies remained predominantly agricultural. Also, the population increased with the annual growth of 2.99 percent (Curtis, 1996).

According to UNDP (2008) report , "Tajikistan's Human Development Index (HDI) dropped from 88th position in the beginning of the 1990s to 108th position of 174 countries in 1999 and 122nd position of 177 countries in 2007" (Silova and Abdushukurova, 2009, p 362).

Many people were killed during the war, especially men. Families migrated to other regions in search of a safe place. Both immigration and out migration took place rapidly. Women and children suffered most during the civil war. Female headed households were at its peak as many women lost their husbands and sons who were the major earner of the households (Falkingham, 2000). As many as 60,000 people were killed and 600,000 internally displaced (McLean and Greene, 1998). The civil war damaged or completely destroyed 20 percent of school infrastructure; it also destroyed a significant proportion of school heating, water and sanitation systems, and educational material were lost and have not been replaced (Whitsel & Mehran, 2010). Further, the economic decline hardly hit the construction industry as a result of which they could produce only few schools each year. This caused many schools to run in triple shifts (Curtis, 1996).

The heavy out migration from the country also brought shortages in labor supply in agriculture and industrial production. At the same time in other parts of the country employment opportunities declined because of the war and economic crisis (Shemyakina, 2006). Women participation from the public sphere disappeared as a result of civil war which disrupted the textile and manufacturing industries that employed high proportion of women (Falkingham, 2000). With poverty already at its peak and government uneven and sluggish economic reform left the country behind in uplifting their social and economic sector in comparison to other FSU countries (FDLC, 2007).

During Soviet period there were many of the public benefits provided to its citizen such as the kindergarten facilities, maternal benefits (post and pre natal care), housing facilities and health care benefits which disappeared because the government was unable to sustain these facilities and benefits because of low budget and economic decline (Falkingham, 2000). The lack

of employment opportunity together with lack of public benefits and accompanying war increased the poverty for many families (Shemyakina, 2006; Falkingham 2000).

The destruction of over 35,000 homes after the civil war brought housing shortage in the country. In 1993, the government provided funds with no interest to the war victims to reconstruct their own homes. By the end of 1995, the government could accomplish 10 percent of the goal of housing construction. In 2004, there is a halt in housing construction because of the poor economy and deteriorating stock market (Tajikistan, 2007). People who migrated started returning to their home districts after the end of civil war. However, they faced a major hardship to regain their earlier status as most of their houses and properties were destroyed by the war. Further, because of the insecurity problem in the country people were afraid to go outside and work which also led to poor living conditions of many families. These were mostly observed in districts that were severely damaged during the war (Curtis, 1996). Criminal activities such as kidnapping, rapes, murders were observed even during the daytime (Shemyakina, 2006).

The civil war of 1992-1997 led to a substantial decrease in educational expenditure resulting in low quality and access to schooling (Briller, 2007). Thus, lack of state and local budget to invest in educational institution affected the children from attending schools (FDLC, 2007). According to UNICEF (2010) only 3.8 percent of GDP was spent on education in the year 2010. Most of the school properties such as school buildings, textbooks and school facilities were destroyed during the war (Curtis, 1996; Whitsel & Mehran, 2010).

Further, gender disparity was observed particularly in educational sector (Falkingham, 2000). There was a pressure from international organizations (World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF etc.) to adopt a gender equality policy in education. Tajikistan's government addressed this situation by implementing four major policies. First, by establishing quotas for girls to enter into higher

education institution; second by granting stipends and financial assistance; third, creating learning center for girls; and fourth, increasing awareness of gender issues to overcome gender stereotypes through mass media. The presidential quotas were mainly given to the girls from poor families to increase their participation in higher education. Despite of this new legislation, government could not increase the girls' participation in higher education (Silova and Abdushukurova, 2009).

Silova and Abdushukurova (2009) provides an example that "Ministry of Education (2008) planned to admit to a total of 6719 female students in higher education institutions based on the presidential quota during the period of 10 years (1997–2007), but was able to enroll only 5,448 female students (a difference of almost 20 percent)" (p.369). Recently there has been a reduction in presidential quota by government for Sughd province. In 2010, Sughd province received 302 seats in local higher educational institutions under the presidential quota which was reduced to 292 seats in 2011 (Valiyey, 2011).

The lack of girls' participation in higher education is because of the poor quality of education rendered in schools in rural areas. Further, government soon changed the policy on the quotas distribution for girls. Females were given quotas for studying courses like nursing, teaching while few quotas were given to women who studied higher paid profession like law, economics and international relations. This change of ways reflects the government dual nature trying to promote gender equality in education and also keeping up with the local community traditional values (Silova and Abdushukurova, 2009).

One of the structural/ institutional changes that the government made was reduction in the compulsory years of schooling. In 1993, the Education Law decreased the period of compulsory education to 9 years and substantially increased the total secondary education for a period of 11

years. The reduction in the period of compulsory education to 9 years has created barriers for girls' to enter into higher education institutions. The reduction in the compulsory years of schooling was not in favor of girls' education as it provided opportunities for families to make decision on the future of girls which generally inclined towards early marriage for many of them (Silova and Abdushukurova, 2009).

Corruption also seems to be widespread in the education system of Tajikistan. Students must pay thousands of dollars to enter into higher education institutions. Whitsel (2010) in the study of educational inequality in Post Soviet Tajikistan points out examples of corruptions in schools such as bribery for passing exams, bribery for acquiring university degrees and getting admission into higher education institutions which have caused a significant withdrawal and drop out of girls from school. Shemyakina (2006) study in Tajikistan showed that weak security system and increasing criminal activities caused girls to stay at home. This resulted in early marriages for most of the children. In addition many children who could go to school dropped out because of years of gap in education after the war ended.

3.2. Culture

The civil war changed the lives of women enormously. They were the ones who suffered the most during the civil war both psychologically and physically. Lack of insecurity in the country prohibited the movement of girls as a result of which gender roles of females became more prominent in the presence of traditional culture and practices that also survived in the Soviet times (Amjad, 2010).

The Soviets brought many changes in the lives of women. Their participation in public sphere increased dramatically with the increase in employment opportunities. Despite of this improvement the traditional role of women existed even before the collapse of Soviet Union

(Falkingham, 2000). During Soviet period, Tajik society always remained segregated on the basis of the public and private spheres of the households. Further, no effort was made by Soviets to bring any changes in the private spheres of the households (Amjad, 2010). The private sphere remained unnoticed and untouched even during the Soviet era. The orthodox Islamic practices particularly wearing of a veil was heavily criticized by the Soviets (Colette, 2004). In their effort to decrease the influence of orthodox Islamic practices they particularly focused on the lack of mosques in the public sphere yet overlooked the Islamic influence within the private realm of household (Amjad, 2010). This may be the reason for the survival traditional practices until present in Tajikistan. One aspect of the Soviet culture that favored traditional role of women was their reproductive role. During the Soviet times, the state provided benefits in terms of child allowances, maternity pay and leave for the birth of each child. After independence these benefits disappeared but the reproductive role remained as an important role performed by women in the private sphere (Falkingham, 2000).

According to Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2000), “Domestic work is defined as cooking, shopping, cleaning, washing clothes, fetching water, and caring for children”(p.26). Further, girls are also taken out of schools to work in fields (Whitlel, 2010). Thus, girls perform both the household chores and working in agricultural fields. In traditional Tajik culture these are the roles that girls are expected to perform on the daily basis because they are taken as female roles (Amjad, 2010). Thus, all these conditions were favorable for keeping girls in the private sphere of household.

In Tajikistan, female children are considered as the temporary members of the family. After marriage girls permanently become members of their husband family thus parents put little or no effort towards the education of girls. The status of daughter in law in the family is very low and

the only way to raise their status is through childbearing. Further, bearing sons would make them permanent members of the family. Further, this is also a way for the continuity to the patriarchal tradition (Falkingham, 2000).

In Tajik society, religion is a glue that keeps society and community life united. Islamic practices are taken with high regard as guidance to maintain their daily life (Falkingham, 2000). Wearing of a veil (Muslim headscarf) is very important according to Islamic practices and those who forbid it are ostracized by society. Colette (2004) explains harsh punishment associated with discarding veil in Tajik society. Girls and women were criticized harshly and some of them were even killed. The wearing of veil is important in Tajik culture because Islam gives importance to preserve the honor of girls and women in society. Thus, men impose women to follow the Islamic norms for they are the ones chosen by Islam as a guardian and protector of the family. Further, women are unable to bargain on this situation as they are less aware of their rights in Islamic laws. The other side of wearing a veil is to keep girls safe from the violence by men because of lack of protection offered by the State (Falkingham, 2000).

In Tajikistan, the government increased the legal age of marriage to 18 years for both men and women since July 2010, still underage marriage is common in Tajik society. There is a harsh punishment associated with underage marriage so many couples marry without getting registered with the government. If either party has not reached the legal age of marriage, the couple performs marriage with the help of a local religious leader. In Islamic laws, Koran does not specify legal age of marriage which means girls can marry at any age. Without government registered marriage, the state cannot provide many rights to women such as divorce, property rights or custody of children to women because of which they are unable to claim for their rights

incase their marriage ends. This further leads to vulnerability of girls and women in Tajik society (Kumkova, 2012).

3.3. Poverty

According to the World Bank (2009), about 53 percent of the Tajik population lives below the poverty line of \$41 USD per month (Briller, 2007). Seventeen per cent of the population lives on less than a dollar a day and 53 percent lives on less than two dollars a day (UNICEF, 2010).

Poverty in Tajikistan must be perceived in terms of the economic decline after independence followed by civil war which completely destroyed the country's economy and further providing them with the status of one of the poorest countries in the world (Curtis, 1996; Briller, 2007; Arazmedova, 2011). The state revenue of Tajikistan that came from the central government dropped to 50 percent after independence and there was also a halt in the barter system that was primarily done with the exchange of cotton for food from other regions (FDLC, 2007).

Tajikistan domestic economy constituted of the aluminum and cotton production during the Soviet times and at present also it accounts for 75 percent of overall export (Jones, Black & Skeldon, 2007). After independence in 1991, the civil war from 1992-1997 disrupted major industrial sectors of the country (FDLC, 2007; Jones, Black & Skeldon, 2007). The mostly hardly hit was the as agriculture, cotton and aluminum refining industries which the region was most famous for. Further, many of the industries closed as a result of government lack of budget to invest for its operation and maintenance (FDLC, 2007).

Tajikistan poor economic situation is because of government negligence in implementation of structural reforms and the debt burden. Further, widespread unemployment in the country as a result of closure of major industries brought poor living conditions in majority of the households (Briller, 2007). Child labor became very common as a result of poverty. According to UNICEF

(2010) approximately 18 percent of young people engage in child labor with 20 percent for boys and 17 percent for girls. Poverty of households forced families to seek the labor of their children for paid and unpaid work to supplement income. According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2000), about 1 percent of children aged 5-15 years are engaged in paid work and about 2.5 percent of them are engaged in unpaid work.

There are several types of work that children do in order to support their families which ranges from car wash in urban areas to working in agricultural field in rural areas. Especially during the harvesting season of farm work more children miss schooling to help their parents in the field (Arazmedova, 2011).

Poverty of families is one of the determining factors for keeping girls out of school in Tajikistan. Economic burden associated with schooling are enormous. During Soviet era, education was free for all levels but after independence school became privatized and semi-privatized so that they could charge high fees from the students (Whitsel, 2009). Although basic education is still free in Tajikistan, the indirect expenses associated with schooling in terms of maintenance of school buildings, supplement teachers' salaries or bribery for promotion to upper level classes makes the cost of schooling even higher (Whitsel, 2009; Arazmedova, 2011, Hunt; 2008). Further, many schools charged students for the use of textbooks (Briler, 2007).

3.3.1. Intersection of poverty and culture

Poverty alone does not constitute the sole obstacle for girl's lack of educational participation. The traditional culture and practices together with poverty further tends to exacerbate the plight of girls. The lack of financial resources at home often changes the investment pattern of the families in poor households. This may be the reason for wide disparity in access to education between boys and girls from poor families than from the higher income

families. These disparities affect girls by limiting them from participating and enjoying many of the opportunities in equal footing with boys (World Bank, 2003).

World Bank (2005) explains the non-attendance and dropouts among girls both by the economic conditions and traditional family preferences. In situation of limited resources at home families choose boys over girls for education while girls stay at home and do the household chores. This was particularly observed in the upper secondary and higher level. In many poor families girls faced the pressure to leave their schools and help their mothers in household work. The perceptions of most of the parents are tied to the traditional cultural practices which see marriage and household work as the reality of girl's life. There is limited benefit by investing in girls' education as compared to boys because boys are the permanent members of the household and the guardian of families (UNICEF, 2010).

Family expenditure priorities are set on the basis of economic return upon investments which are influenced by gender roles for males and females. Families with low income make sure that their children receive primary education but families change their decisions in the situation of lack of income at home. Their decisions are influenced by the gender roles and traditional cultural practices (Baschieri & Falkingham, 2004). UNICEF (2007) on qualitative survey on issues of girls' education in Tajikistan showed that the cost of schooling was the main reason given by parents for not sending their children to school; still parents chose to send boys to school and not girls. Kumkova (2012) reports a similar case of a family situation of girls needing education less than boys as Najmiddinova says that she will focus on sending her two sons to school, who will earn money while refrain from sending girls to school as they will marry soon.

Tajikistan Living Standard Survey (TLSS) study in 2003 showed that there are differences in education enrollment by age, gender and welfare status. There is minor gender gap at age 11 and 12 followed by an absolute gender gap at age 16 and 17. Similarly by welfare status, poor girls begin to drop out of school after age 12 and enrolment rates in ages 15-17 are lowest for poor girls (Bashieri & Falkingham, 2004).

3.4. School Factors

The Soviets focused on gender-neutral policies which meant equality in terms of access, attainment and achievement. But with the independence of Tajikistan, accessibility and quality of education declined with further decline in the participation of girls in school as compared to boys (Silova & Magno, 2004). According to UNICEF (2001), prior to 1991 the basic education enrollment for Tajikistan was 95 percent which dropped to 85 percent a year after independence and continued to be same until 1997 and in the year 2000 it was 88 percent (World Bank, 2003).

On average, fewer girls than boys attend school. In the year 1998, girls' enrollment was lower for both the lower secondary level (89 per 100 girls) and upper secondary level (63 per 100 boys). However, there were reductions for both boys and girls in post-compulsory education with 28 percent for boys and 53 percent for girls thus widening the gender gap even more. Further, in higher education female student constitute approximately a quarter of all students (Silova & Abdushukurova, 2009).

The qualities of schools in Tajikistan have deteriorated. The civil war destroyed 20 percent of the schools. More than 130 school buildings need renovation and improved classroom facilities. Further, there are deficiencies of tapped water in 24 percent of schools, toilets in 35 percent schools and heating system in 26 percent of schools (Briller, 2007). About 30 percent of schools in Tajikistan do not have enough desks and chairs. The shortage must be viewed in terms of the

imports of one desk and two chairs at cost price of approximately US 30 dollars. Further, many schools lack technical facilities in classroom such as computers facilities which limits the teacher teaching practices (UNICEF, 2010).

Table 1 Education system structure in Tajikistan

Education	Level	Grade	Year
1.Preschool education	Acquire some reading and writing skills	n/a	1-6 years
2.General education	Elementary education (primary school)	grade 1-4	7-11 years
	Basic Secondary education (middle school)	grade 5-9	11-14 years
	High School	grade 10-11	15-17 years
3.Professional education	Primary professional	1-4 years of training	n/a
	Secondary professional	2-4 years of training	n/a
	Higher education	4-6 years of training	n/a
4.Post-higher or graduate education	n/a	n/a	n/a
5. Additional or continuing education in grade schools, institutes of professional education and other educational institutions.			

Source: Briller, 2004

Table 1 shows the level of education in Tajikistan. The general educations in Tajikistan are divided into primary and secondary schooling with 9 years of compulsory education followed by professional education and post-higher or graduate education. According to Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)(2000), in Tajikistan only 4 percent of children aged 36-59 months are attending kindergarten with boys slightly more than girls to attend such programs (4.6 percent and 3.5 percent respectively). However, there is a vast difference between children in urban and rural areas with 15 percent and 1 percent attending kindergarten respectively.

Shortages of teachers are major problem in many schools in Tajikistan. There are shortages of over 9000 teachers in schools and the average monthly salary for teacher is less than US 20

dollar (Briller, 2007). Thus, shortage of teachers must be observed in terms of low salary for them. Teachers' salaries are so low that teachers have to take an additional to supplement their meager income. For example, teachers' salary cover 20 percent of basic expenditure and remaining 80 percent must be covered by additional work (UNICEF, 2010). In rural areas many teachers work part time in agricultural field or seller in market thus increasing the workload for them (Briller, 2007).

Lack of qualified teachers further added to the poor learning environment in schools. Out of total number of teachers, only 61.9 percent have higher education and 11 percent have general secondary education. Overcrowding is another problem in schools in Tajikistan with about 85 per cent of schools operating in double and triple shifts (Curtis, 1996; Briller, 2007). Also, once girls reach higher education based on presidential quota most of them drop out because of the inferior quality of education received in their local schools in rural areas. As Silova and Abdushukurova (2009) put forward a study by Ministry of Education in Tajikistan (2002) revealed a significant difference in student achievement by geography, with students from urban areas scoring highest and students from rural areas scoring lowest in their studies. According to Hotkina and Rabieva (2003) because of poor general education rendered in rural schools, about 7 percent of girls who were admitted to higher education based on presidential quotas dropped out mainly for underachievement. Further, there is less positive attitude among girls and young women about the value of education in raising their socioeconomic condition (Silova & Abdushukurova, 2009). According to UNICEF (2006), approximately 40 percent of girls believed that education will not have a positive influence to achieve success in life (Silova & Abdushukurova, 2009).

3.4.1. Intersection of school factors and culture

School is also a place where genders are socialized. The socialization takes place in the form of teachers' attitude towards their students, course curriculum, class selection, subject preference etc. Whitsel (2010) in his study 'Classroom Gender Differences in Tajikistan' shows that the differences are perceived in terms of seating arrangement, grades and classroom participation. The study also found that these differences were not always favorable to boys as in the case of seating arrangement where girls were seated in front and boys at the back. This way girl could get more attention, and the least grade the girls would get was 4 out of 5, while for boys it was 3. Wilson (2011) study in sub Saharan Africa on gender based violence showed a different perspective on differences in classroom participation based on seating arrangement. Girls were made to sit at the back of the classroom and were given cleaning and maintenance works while boys were favored for academic learning. Teaching practice is also a factor for lower participation of children in school. Whitsel (2010) showed that teachers' poor management skills resulted in dominant students controlling the class.

Gender stereotypes are also encountered in terms of course selection. Mostly girls are enrolled in vocational schools and boys are seen enrolled in technical schools. The government policy reflects the gender stereotype as quotas were given to girls for studying lower paid profession such as nursing and teaching, and only few quotas were given to girls' for studying subjects like law, business and international relation (Silova & Abdushukurova, 2009). This shows that government itself is promoting gender stereotypes in education further widening the gender disparity.

Overall, this chapter explores how different factors like political and institutional factor, culture, poverty and school factors create barriers towards girls' educational participation in

Tajikistan. However the intersections of one or more factors like poverty and culture create situation for families to opt boys to send school and restrict girls. This decision is based on the cultural context as they outweigh the benefit of boys and girls education. The intersection between school factors and culture determines how gender stereotypes are promoted by schools in terms of classroom participation, grading, curriculum, subject selection etc.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH METHODS

The study utilized secondary data collected by UNICEF in Tajikistan for a study of girls drop out from school. The goal of this study was to find out the demand side factors from the community and drop out girls themselves to increase their participation in schools. The data sources were available to me by my professor and advisor Dr. Christopher Whitsel, assistant professor of Sociology. The data was already transcribed into English without any individual identifying information. Originally, the focus group discussions and individual interviews were conducted in Tajik language. The data was collected in last two weeks of May 2010. The study was conducted in five districts of Tajikistan-Khatlon province-Qabodiyon and Panj district, Sughd province-Isfara and Istaravshan districts and Raions of Republican Subordination (RRS)-Rasht district. Four out of five districts were UNICEF priority districts except Istaravshan which was selected for control purpose.

4.1. Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is a method through which the participants share their knowledge and perspective over a particular topic set by the researcher. It is an interactive process as group members continually engage in discussion with the other members of the group. The researcher role is passive throughout the discussion.

Altogether there were 13 focus groups discussions (FGDs) conducted in 5 districts with 4-12 participants in each of them. The focus group discussions were conducted with fathers, brothers, elders, leaders, mothers, grandmothers mixed and separately. Two focus group discussions were conducted with the drop out girls. The question of focus group discussions centered on finding out the attitudes of respondent on girl's education, reasons for poor school attendance and dropouts, families and girls demand on the kinds of support from the government to increase the

educational participation of girls. In most cases, focus group discussion participants were identified with the help of the school directors. In other cases drop out girls were identified by former classmates, random household visits and through local NGO.

Table 2 Focus group discussion according to province, district, participants and number of participants

Province	District	Participants	Number of Participants
Khatlon	Qabodiyon	Mothers	9
		Leaders	7
	Panj	Drop out girls	4
Sughd	Isfara	Fathers and Elders	12
		Brothers	7
	Istaravshan	Teachers	10
		Teachers and leaders	12
		Mothers and Grandmothers	11
Raions of Republic Subordination(RRS)	Rasht	Fathers and Brothers	8
		Grandmothers	7
		Leaders	12
		Teachers	7
		Drop out girls	6

Table 2 describes the focus group discussions according to province, districts, participants and number of participants. In Khatlon province, altogether 3 FGDs were conducted in Qabodiyon with leaders and mothers, and in Panj district with the drop out girls. In Qabodiyon the participants consisted of head of village and women society, businessman, chief woman nurse, principal of school and deputy head of village. In Panj FGD was conducted with drop out girls which took place at one of their homes. Drop out girls were identified by former classmates.

In Sughd province, altogether 5 FGDs were conducted in Isfara and Istaravshan districts. In Isfara district 3 FGDs were conducted with fathers and elders that consisted of 12 participants, with brothers that consisted of 7 participants and with teachers that consisted of 10 participants.

In Istaravshan district, FGD was conducted with teachers and leaders that consisted of 12 participants and with mothers and grandmothers consisting of 11 participants.

In Raions of Republic Subordination (RRS), altogether 5 FGDs were conducted in Rasht district. FGD was conducted with fathers and brothers consisting of 8 participants where most of them had their daughters or sisters in grade 9, 8 or 7. FGD with grandmothers consisted of 7 participants, leaders consisting of 12 participants, teachers consisting of 7 participants and drop out girls with 6 participants, and none of them went to school beyond grade four.

In focus group discussions that contained mixed participants such as with leaders, they had disparate views on the questions asked. In fathers and elders, it was observed that there was dominance in discussion with those who had high social status in society such as elders who was also former teacher in the village. In FGD with drop out girls in Panj district girls were very shy and did not participate much in discussion while in the other FGD with girls there was good group interaction but the elder participants were dominating the group discussion and the younger ones were agreeing to it.

4.2. Individual Interview

An individual interview is a face-to face interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. It is aimed to find out the interviewee experiences and perspectives on a particular event and situation. The researcher interviewer is active throughout the whole process of interaction.

There were altogether seven girls were selected from the FGDs with the drop out girls to conduct individual interviews. Five individual interviews were conducted the drop out girls and 2 were conducted with the drop out girl and their mothers. In Isfara district, altogether 3 individual interviews were conducted: 2 with drop out girls and one with drop out girl and her mother. In

Istaravshan district, an individual interview was conducted with the drop out girl and another with her mother. In Rasht district, 2 individual interviews were conducted with the drop out girls.

Focus group discussion and individual interview both have their own benefits and limitations. Focus group consists of large set of participants. There is a tendency to get varieties of opinion and perspectives on the topic from the participants which is not possible in individual interview where the researcher can get only one perspective on the topic from participant. However, in individual interview there is always a tendency to report unusual behaviors as it contains face to face interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. In focus group discussion the participants' dominancy over the group can be perceived easily. Researchers can hardly control the group as they are passive throughout the discussion. So, there is a danger that group might be swayed by a dominant participant perspective. In individual interview the researcher role is active and they can direct and control the whole interview process. Thus, the researchers can dig deeper to furnish rich data to their study. In focus group as there are multiple opinions, it is harder for researcher to capture all the data and may miss some important perspectives while in individual interview the researcher has the ability to capture the perspectives very well.

4.3. Coding

Coding was done using an Atlas.ti program, a program which is mainly used for the analysis of qualitative data. Coding was done in two steps. The first step was an initial coding. In the initial coding, I gave code labels to sentences, text and paragraph. Passages or texts that convey similar meaning were given a same code label. There were some interesting ideas that were less relevant to my studies yet I coded it thinking that I could find a tie with other codes and

categories in my second step of coding process. In this way I generated several codes. The initial code consisted of 77 codes.

Focused coding was done in the second step in which the codes were rechecked to sort out useful codes. I did this by eliminating codes that were less useful and merging the ones that convey the same meaning. In this way, I generated 19 focused codes. Based on the codes, I formed four main categories. The names of the categories were formed based on the background information from literature review. These categories were later taken as broader themes.

Table 3 Category, codes and frequency of codes

Categories	Codes	Frequency of Codes
Political and institutional factors	Lack of employment opportunities	6
	Insecurity	9
	Insufficient presidential quota	3
	Corruption	2
Poverty	Poor living condition	48
	Cost of schooling	29
	Lack of money	7
	Family structure	5
Culture	Household work	49
	Early marriage	11
	Patriarchy	11
	Religion	13
School issues	Unqualified teachers	13
	Attitude of teachers	3
	Lack of vocational classes	20
	School violence	17
	Lack of higher education institution	8
	Low salary for teachers	7
	Poor school facilities	10

Table 3 shows categories, codes and frequency of codes. There are four categories which later turned out to be themes. For each category there are some codes. Altogether there are 19 codes with its frequency. The code with highest frequency is household work 49 and poor living condition 48 followed by cost of schooling 29 and lack of vocational classes 20. These frequency

numbers shows that household work and poor living condition was the top most responses by the participants. Also, through the comparison of categories I found that political and institutional factors, though less frequent, work at the background for all the other factors and are invisible at the outset.

However, based on the frequency we cannot come to conclusion that the poor living condition and household work caused girls to drop out and corruption had least effect on girls' educational participation. As the focus group discussions were done with the family members many of them seem to have less knowledge of political and institutional setting. Thus, they focused on poor living condition and household work and this was true especially in the case of women participants. However, educated members like leaders, and teachers provided a different perspective on the lack of girls' educational participation.

Further, the result from the analysis cannot be generalized into wider settings because it covered only five districts. Two districts were more represented than others due to relatively bigger schools selected. Specific customs, household characteristics, geography etc. prevalent in the districts may have influenced the overall results.

4.4. Benefits and Limitations

The benefit of using secondary data for the study was that it saved time, funds and effort of the researcher as the data was readily available. Also, the researcher would not have been able to collect a wide set of data from different districts and populations which would have been unfeasible using primary data collection method. However there are some drawbacks in using secondary data. When using secondary data the researcher is removed from the actual setting and this limits the researcher from knowing many missing links such as participants' actions and gestures which could have been possible by using primary data. Sometimes not only the verbal

answers but participants' gestures are an important source of getting detail information on the drop out behavior. Also, there were many instances where the researcher found the possibilities of probing in questions which was either ended or jumped on to next questions. So as a researcher this missing link created many unexplained situations which the researcher had to explain by crosschecking within and from the focus group discussions and individual interviews. This consumed the time of the researcher.

Overall the research method section reflected on the use of secondary data for the study. Further, it showed the two methods-focus group discussions and individual interviews as a two important method of gathering data. The data was collected in 5 districts of Tajikistan. Further, these data were analyzed by researcher in an Atlas.ti program which generated numerous codes. The researcher did coding in two steps- initial and focused codes which further created 19 focused codes. Based on those codes categories were made which were taken as themes for the study. These themes are analyzed in the chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5. RESULTS

There are differences in perspectives among the participants on the girls' drop out from school in Tajikistan. Poverty was one of the most favored responses among all the participants. In general participants like fathers, brothers, elders, leaders, teachers and grandmothers discussed the lack of employment opportunities for girls once they graduate. Leaders' discussion was centered on many issues such as civil war, school issues, early marriages, household work with less discussion on poverty. The discussion were also centered on the structural deficiency at school such as lack of school facilities, school renovation, building maintenance etc. and so did the teachers. In addition, the teachers also talked about the poor classroom facilities at schools.

Grandmothers and mothers discussed mainly on the lack of funds at home, lack of school supplies for girls and household work as reasons for keeping girls out of school. Overall both the male and female participants' discussions were strongly centered on the household work for missing school which they took it as an alternative in periods of financial difficulties. However, there are differences between fathers' and elders' perspectives of the gender roles in comparison to mothers' and grandmothers'. The former focused more on the marriage of girls while the latter on the household work. Fathers' and brothers' discussions also centered on the insecurity for girls. Brothers were most conservative in their perspective about girls' education because they generally discussed on the differences between males and females roles in society. In contrast, focus group discussions and individual interviews with the drop out girls' revealed lack of school uniform and classroom issues such as violence by teachers and boys. Their responses to some degree also showed acceptance of their gender roles in society.

Below I review the findings of political and institutional factors, poverty, culture and school issues with a discussion and the quotations from the participants themselves.

5.1. Political and Institutional Factors

Political instability and civil war caused the destruction of infrastructures, decreased employment opportunity, poor living conditions of families and corruption in the country. Government failure to absorb the large number of graduates to the current labor market with fewer opportunities led family members to withdraw children from schools. From the focus group discussions it was revealed that family members do not see the value in education because of lack of jobs. The following quotation was taken from a FGD with grandmothers. One grandmother was educated, knew the importance of education and is talking about lack of jobs once student graduate from school. In this FGD all of the participants' grandsons and granddaughters have completed grade 9 or were studying in grade 9. Other participants' responses in this FGD were centered on lack of school supplies, school expenses and poor living condition.

Participant 4 My grandson had graduated from university, but can't find a job. In that case why government is still insisting on people education, if they can't provide jobs to graduates? Many pupils and students think the same; why should I study, if government can't guarantee me a job? If government could guarantee a job, my grandson wouldn't be unemployed. My grandson decided to move to Russia. Who needs such education, that can't ensure you a job?

(Focus group discussion, Grandmothers, Gharm district)

The above quotation was selected as it falls within the issues of government not being able to provide job opportunities upon graduation. This is true for many girls as there exists few job opportunities available for them once they graduate. Lack of job opportunity is another reason for girls to drop out from school because parents do not find the expected outcome of education. Similarly, there are brothers talking about the same issue. The following quotation from focus group discussion with brothers demonstrates the fact that unless government is able to provide workplace for girls it does not matter how educated the girls are.

Participant 2 We can't provide any workplace for our women, because all facilities are out of order for a long time. Let's consider that our girls got education, what they will do in here, while we have no jobs for them?

(Focus group discussion, Brothers, Isfara district)

Participant 2 We don't have much job opportunities in our village. Even if girls receive full education, they don't have any chance to find a job. Many of them know that they can't afford admission to university.

(Focus group discussion, Fathers and elders, Isfara district)

The government facilitated presidential quotas, which provides money for higher education, is also low in numbers. With insufficient quotas, families are unable to bear the expenses associated with higher education as a result of which families have to unwillingly discontinue girls' education. The following quotation shows that with low quota assigned for districts it becomes difficult for poor families to send their daughters to school and ultimately they drop out once they complete their compulsory education.

Participant 12 Presidential quota assigned for our area is very low. Local population has poor living conditions. Majority is educated, but they don't have adequate financial conditions to encourage girls to continue education. I mean, parents want their girls to study, but can't afford higher education. Government should support us.

(Focus group discussion, Fathers and elders, Isfara district)

Fathers, elders, teachers and leaders discussed on the government facilitated presidential quota which the dropout girls, mothers and grandmothers did not mention. They are the ones who deal with the outside sphere of household. They make major decisions regarding the education of their daughters while females just obey them, a part of patriarchal society. If fathers give permission then girls goes to school otherwise they sit at home taking care of their elders, engage in household chores and get skills to prepare themselves for marriage. From FGD, it was also recognized that fathers have experienced bribery as a part of getting their daughters to enroll for higher education. So they have knowledge about this issue and feel comfortable talking about

it, but the female members may have only heard about the system and have little knowledge about it.

But the problem persists beyond this situation. Even if the quotas are low, students can get the quota if they are able to bribe the administration or teachers. The following quotation demonstrates the insufficiency of presidential quota in schools.

Participant 9 I guess there must be a special presidential quota for education. But no support was ever provided to girls of our mahalla. One quota is given to our district every year, but I guess corrupted administration passes that quota for own children.

(Focus group discussion, Leaders, Gharm district)

In addition, the government policy to reduce compulsory education increased the dropout rate of girls' from school. Secondary education seemed less important for many parents. The change in compulsory education to nine years increased the scope for parents to decide on the future of girls who are often inclined towards performing their gender role. Most of the issues regarding the administration and structural change came up from the male members of the family and their reasoning for girls to drop out from school are centered on these issues while female participants like mothers, grandmothers and the dropout girls issue of concern was lack of school supplies and outwear as a reason for drop out. Reduction in number of schooling years thus acted as a barrier for girls to continue their education, which the following quotation demonstrates.

Participant 2 Now education is optional after completion of G9, but in the past, completion of G11 was compulsory for everybody. I wish that Ministry of Education makes some changes in school program. Government might establish an education center for girls who completed G9 or G11. They might get a profession and new skills in that education center. Many girls can't complete G9, because they are given to an early marriage.

(Focus group discussion, Fathers and elders, Isfara district)

Most of the participants talking about the political and institutional factors were the leaders, teachers, fathers and elders. It can be concluded that they talked about the broader picture as in the structural change in the educational system. None of the other female participants talked about the political scenario or lack of government funding crisis. This may be because women participation in the public sphere is much less compared to men. Men are more educated than women so they are aware of the outer national scenario while women view of public sphere is merely the men version of the story.

5.2. Poverty

Poor living conditions was the highest factor which came out during FGD and individual interviews from all the participants as a reason for girls to drop out from school. Fathers, elders, grandmothers and mothers mentioned poor living conditions in terms of shortage of money to fulfill their basic needs and lack of school supplies, and clothing for their daughters while leaders added global financial crisis for poor living condition of the family. The following quotation touches on many aspects of poverty as viewed by family members and leaders.

Participant 4 Poor living conditions, shortage of food and school uniform are the reason of poor school attendance by girls.

(Focus group discussion, Brothers, Isfara district)

Participant 7 GFC had affected all our population, including boys and girls. Many fathers are working in Russia; children left with no attention, thus drop-out of school. Lack of money to buy uniform, shoes, supplies and etc. make many girls drop-out of school.

(Focus group discussion, Leaders, Gharm district)

The discontinuation of state benefits has increased the poverty of many families. State benefits such as free healthcare, housing facilities, free education, nurseries, kindergarten facilities, cash benefit to widowed mother and universal childcare allowances have also been abolished. The following quotation by fathers and elders provides an example of lack of

kindergarten facility causing girls to stay at home and work because their mothers have to contribute to family income.

Participant 12 Poor living condition. For instance, father is labor migrant in Russia, mother has to work at field; thus girl stays at home and looks after younger children, we don't have kindergarten in our village.

(Focus group discussion, Fathers and elders, Isfara district)

Poor families must balance their meager income between various household expenses such as food, education, housing, healthcare etc. In most poor families the money they earn is spent on food thus leaving smaller amounts for other household expenses. This is one of the reasons for families being unable to support the education of their children. The following quotations by the mothers and grandmothers group demonstrate the fact about the earning spent primarily on food thus decreasing their ability to support the education of girls, and so does the second quotation by a mother from the individual interview. Mothers, grandmothers and brothers here are talking about provision of food because when poverty strikes hard on families both males and females have to work to contribute to family income.

Participant 2 Majority of population has poor living conditions. Men work, while women stay at home. In recent years we also start to contribute into family budget, by selling at bazaar. Majority of what we earn we spend to buy food.

(Focus group discussion, Mothers and grandmothers, Istaravshan district)

Mother All money I earn we have to spend for provision (food). If I could have better income, I would force my daughters to go to school on a regular basis.

(Individual interview, Mother, Isfara district)

Participant 4 My brother and I work as a journey-man and we are only breadwinners in our family. You might know that current living conditions do not allow us to support education of both daughters and sons. Any money we earn is spent for food.

(Focus group discussion, Brothers, Isfara district)

Cost of schooling was observed in terms of tuition fee, textbooks, school uniform, shoes and other hidden cost associated with schooling such as fees for classroom maintenance and building renovation. Although cost of schooling was observed by all the participants, it was mainly a

focal point for the fathers, mothers and grandmothers who often had to deal with both the official and unofficial expenses of schooling. Focus group discussion with grandmothers and mothers demonstrated that school expenses are high and numerous, and poor families cannot afford all of them. Inability to cover school expenses has caused many girls to drop out from school.

Participant 6 I agree what people have said. School expenses are high and we can't afford many of them. Once I asked my daughter why she doesn't go to school. She told me that she doesn't have textbooks. She would go to school if she had textbooks or textbooks would be free of charge.

(Focus group discussion, Grandmothers, Gharm district)

Unofficial cost of schooling as mentioned earlier as a hidden cost is also a reason for increase in school expenses. These are mostly incurred for maintenance of school, renovation and sometimes for personal expenses of teachers. Discussion with fathers and brothers, and mothers and grandmothers demonstrates an increase in expenses as a result of unofficial cost.

Participant 4 You need a lot of money, so that your child will be able going to school; money for textbooks, uniform, lunches, school supplies and etc. I don't have any daughters and all my sons have grown up. I have granddaughters in G6 and G3. They are doing well at school, but school administration permanently asks for money for textbooks fee, renovation, and shares for Roghun HPP. You know that many people in here are unemployed, we don't have fixed income.

(Focus group discussion, Mothers and grandmothers, Istaravshan district)

Participant 10 I have two children at G6 and G4. They complain that teachers ask money to buy shares of HPP Roghun. It is not about money, but where money is transferred. Children who pay are not given any invoices and nobody knows for what purpose money are spent.

(Focus group discussion, Fathers and brothers, Gharm district)

In addition, cost of schooling was always equated firstly with the lack of school uniform and then with the rest of the other expenses like textbooks, tuition fee, etc. This is because school uniforms of girls were expensive in comparison to boys. Mothers and grandmothers discussed more about school uniform and clothes of girls in comparison to the other male participants such as fathers perhaps because girls were more comfortable talking about their clothes with their

mothers and grandmothers. In other FGD with fathers elders and brothers have heard of girls complaining about their clothes to their mothers but never complained to them. The following quotations from focus group discussion with mothers provide evidence of school uniform for girls being expensive and this is one of the reasons why girls have poor attendance in school in comparison to boys.

Participant 5 I have 5 grandchildren. All of them go to school, but youngest have poor attendance. She feels ashamed, that we can't afford same dresses as her friends wear. She complains to us that many girls offend her because of her poverty. I can't find any other reason of poor school attendance by girls.

(Focus group discussion, Grandmothers, Gharm district)

Participant 3 Boys can go to school, even though if they wear casual clothes (it might be black trousers and a white shirt). But this is not an option for girls, who have to wear either school uniform or a national dress.

(Focus group discussion, Mothers, Qabodiyon district)

Participant 2 Outwear and uniform for boys is cheaper in comparison to girls.

(Focus group discussion, Mothers, Qabodiyon district)

Besides the school uniform, families' inability to fulfill the demand of the girls also affects their participation in school. Once girls grow up they are influenced by their rich peers in style and dresses at school. Sometimes there is a pressure from girls to parents to fulfill their demand and if it is not attained they either blackmail or some even drop out of school to save themselves from being ashamed in front of their peers. The following quotation with leaders from focus group discussion provides an example of girls' dropout as a result of families' lack of budget to fulfill their demands. Focus group discussion with mothers, and mothers and grandmothers reveal some of the demands of girls and inability to fulfill it leads girls' missing school or dropping out. Grandmothers and mothers are talking about the dresses and accessories perhaps because girls' see mothers and grandmothers as a mediator to fulfill their demand because fathers and brothers seem to be controlling the behavior of girls.

Participant 4 Once girls grow up they want additional accessories like rings, earrings, necklaces and etc, which are very expensive items.

(Focus group discussion, Mothers, Qabodiyon district)

Participant 4 You need a lot of money, so that you child will be able going to school; money for textbooks, uniform, lunches, school supplies and etc. Rich families have all conditions for their children. For example, my niece, when she is back from school tells us about new dress of her rich friend and blackmails us with drop out to buy her the same dress. Her brother can't buy her such expensive dress, and she is not going to school for 1 month. Another girl of our mahalla dropped out when she was G6. Reasons were old clothes and she is shy because of that. Poverty - is the main reason of poor school attendance and drop outs.

(Focus group discussion, Mothers and grandmothers, Istaravshan district)

Besides mothers and grandmothers, leaders too are talking about girls issues in school. FGDs with leaders comprised of one principal and teachers who have the ability to track the studies of girls. These people are familiar with their background. In many cases when girls dropped out from school, principals and teachers personally visited their houses, tried solving their problem and encouraged them to join school again. In this way they became aware of the situation of girls that forced them to drop out from school.

Participant 4 Once girl is growing up, she would like to have stylish outwear and dresses. If any girl can't afford the same dress like her friend, then she feels shy because of family poverty and decides to drop-out of school.

(Focus group discussion, Leaders, Gharm district)

Income shock is constantly faced by poor families in periods of severe financial difficulties. In such periods families withdraw girls from school so that they can engage in work at home while their family can engage in paid work. The following quotation by a brother demonstrates that financial difficulties leave girls no choice but to drop out of school to work at home or help their mothers, and it also shows the period of time they miss schooling. The other quotation by teachers demonstrates the period of time girls stay at home to help their mothers. So in a 12 month period girls go to school regularly for nearly 9 months excluding all other factors such as lack of school supplies, sickness etc.

Participant 3 Girl will go to school for 3-4 months, but then another financial problem will pop-out and girl will have no choice, but to drop-out, in order to help her parents or get some skills to earn money.

(Focus group discussion, Brothers, Isfara district)

Participant 2 A girl from my class started to miss classes. I visited her at home and talked to her mother. Her mother told me that girl's help is needed to pill 1 ton of walnuts. We agreed that she stays at home only 1 week, but she stayed 3 weeks.

(Focus group discussion, Teachers, Isfara district)

It was also observed that in many cases teachers gave days off to students so that they can work outside and contribute to the family expenses. The following quotation by teachers demonstrates that boys are not an exception when it comes to contributing to family income in case of lack of money at home. The only difference is the choice of girls and boys for work while both are on the same track of earning money.

Participant 2 Many schoolchildren miss classes during bazaar days - Sunday, Tuesday and Thursdays. Boys don't go to school, but to bazaar. They help their parents or help buyers to carry goods. When I ask them why they missed classes, the answer is that they needed to earn some money for their family

(Focus group discussion, Teachers, Isfara district)

In most female headed households, the poverty level is very high. When the male head is a migrant worker in Russia, the responsibilities of females pile up who now have to work inside and outside home to earn money. It is even harder for families whose husband took new family in Russia. The following quotation from focus group discussion with mothers provides an example of the drop out from school despite of the girls' interest to go to school. This can also be treated as those girls who belong to the female headed household the pressure to drop out are high as compared to those which have both the parents at home.

Mother She has completed G4 and dropped-out school at G5. The reason she left, was poor living conditions, despite that she liked studying. Father left to Russia (as a labor migrant), and she was helping her mother at home to crack walnuts, for further retail.

(Individual interview, Drop out girl, Istaravshan district)

Besides the female headed household, the family structure is another kind increasing the poverty of many families. In large families in which there are many mouths to feed, most of the family's earning goes toward food. The following quotation from focus group discussion with fathers and brothers revealed that large families cannot afford many of the school supplies that are needed for girls to go to school because with large families comes budget deficit in families.

Participant 1 Large family is another factor why girls have poor school attendance. Poor living conditions don't allow large families to buy school uniform, supplies, shoes and etc.

(Focus group discussion, Fathers and brothers, Gharm district)

Another outcome of large families is increasing work load for girls such as doing household chores, looking after their siblings and taking care of the elderly and sick ones. With piles of work girls are left with less time for their studies. They fall behind in their studies in comparison to their classmates and feel ashamed and stop going to school. They prefer working at home than going to school to avoid possible humiliation from their teachers and friends. The following quotation shows large family's effect on girls' school participation.

Participant 1 Large family is another factor why girls have poor school attendance. Girls have to help their mothers at home.

(Focus group discussion, Brothers, Isfara district)

It is mostly the elder daughter who has to miss going to school to help with the household chores and to take care of the sick ones. The following quotation from FGD with mothers and grandmothers provides the evidence of mothers' preference of elder daughter for the household chores. Daughters stay at home so that other family members could go outside and earn money. When it comes to decisions regarding household work, mothers and grandmothers are the one who decide on which gender and age group should refrain from going to school. This also denotes that within the same gender female also there are differences in participation in schools.

Participant 3 I am a mother to three daughters. They all go to school, but sometimes my eldest daughter has to stay at home and help me with housework.
(Focus group discussion, Mothers and grandmothers, Istaravshan district)

Participant 1 I had 4 sons and we used to live in the same household. One of my sons died in 2004 and he left 3 children. My daughter in-law is seller at bazaar. Elder daughter stays at home to look after me and younger brother/sisters. I am seriously sick for the last 6 months.
(Focus group discussion, Grandmothers, Gharm district)

5.3. Culture

Traditional culture of Tajik society is one of the factors keeping girls out of school. FGD with fathers and elders, brothers, mothers and grandmothers and dropout girls themselves revealed evidence of strong stereotypes such as housework, rearing and caring of child, taking care of the elderly, marriage etc. This stereotype has confined girls to the private sphere of household thus giving less opportunity for them to be involved in public sphere. By contrast higher education, good jobs, decision maker in family are some of the roles by which males are measured. These stereotypical roles are reinforced in gender through socialization process by families, school, media etc. Families force their sons towards getting higher education while girls are trained to learn skills and household work for their future marriage. Focus group discussion with mothers and grandmothers reveal some of the stereotypical roles of females. Mothers and grandmothers are talking about the female stereotypical role because they have been socialized in a similar way and this is how they perceive the female roles to be.

Participant 5 The most important is to learn a trade (skill, art); for any woman the most important are her house, family, husband and children.
(Focus group discussion, Mothers and grandmothers, Istaravshan district)

Participant 6 It is not compulsory that girl gets an education. Many of young girls can't even cook. I would propose better option: once girl reaches G7-G8, her mother should teach her on housekeeping, rather than spending money on her education.

(Focus group discussion, Brothers, Isfara district)

After family, school is the place where genders are socialized. So, it is equally important to know how these stereotypes are widened further outside the household sphere. The following quotation from a teacher reveals the differences in boys' and girls' work with conforming attitude towards girls' role as a caregiver. This was the only one teacher whose response showed an evidence of gender stereotype while none of the other teachers' mentioned it.

Participant 4 In some families girls have to drop out of school, in order to look after their sick mothers. Sad to say that, but boys can't nurse the sick.
(Focus group discussion, Teachers, Gharm district)

When teachers' attitude shows a strong stereotype, it is hard to believe that their teaching practices would be gender sensitive. It is also equally important to know the perspective of girls themselves to see how they view their prescribed role. From FGD with drop out girls it was revealed that they accepted their roles without any hesitancy, taking it as a normal part of their lives. When gender roles are constantly ingrained from young age it seems right for them to play and fulfill it. The following quotation from focus group discussion with drop out girls suggests their acceptance of the gender roles.

Participant 4 We clean our houses, help parents at field. Our family has 40 hectares of land and I also help adults in there. I work together with my uncles and elder sister, who also dropped-out from G3.
(Focus group discussion, Drop out girls, Panj district)

Participant 2 The future of all girls is to marry and work at fields.
(Focus group discussion, Drop out girls, Panj district)

In patriarchal society men are the breadwinners of the family while women are to be married off and confined to household work. The following quotations from brothers demonstrate this perspective on the roles by which females should abide with. It also shows a general attitude of public on education for girls. Brothers were more conservative from rest of the participants on

their view on girls' education perhaps because they belonged to backward and traditional society as compared to participants from other places.

Participant 6 Personally, I don't want that my sister goes to school. She knows how to read, write and count; as for me it is more than enough. As she completes G9, we will stop her from going to school. My wife completed only G5, but she is smart and has embroidery skills, so she can teach my sister for embroidery skills. In general, men of our village tend to marry young girls and they don't care whether a girl is educated or not. But they prefer uneducated girls; they do not ask many questions (laughing).

(Focus group discussion, Brothers, Isfara district)

In patriarchal society, a male family member retains a power over the action of their children and makes decision on how resources should be spent. It is father who makes major decisions on economic affairs such as investment on education, healthcare and family matters like marriages of their children. The older women also enjoy higher position within the family yet their sex places them in subordinate position to males. From focus group discussion with mothers it was discovered that in most cases wives had to take consent from their husband to send their daughter to school. Fathers did not talk about their seniority within a family perhaps because they think being born as male automatically provides them with power.

Mother She is the eldest child of her family. Since her father left to Russia (as a labor migrant), her uncle had forbidden her to go to school. Father has been in Russia 4 years ago. During the absence of her father, uncle is the chief of Meena's family. Everybody obeys what he says, he is also considered to be head of village (community). His own sons and daughters also dropped-out in G5 and G6.

(Individual Interview, Mother, Istaravshan district)

Marriage is the ultimate destiny of girls in Tajik society. Parents put all the effort on girls to make them learn household skills which can feed them with a good marriage partner. Thus, early marriage has become very common in remote and rural areas of Tajik society. Except for teachers, none of the other participants like fathers, brothers, elders and mothers mentioned about it perhaps because they viewed early marriage as a result of poverty. The first quotation by teachers demonstrates parents' effort on girls and boys education in patriarchal society. Further

the next quotation also explains that despite the decree set by government early marriages are still taking place. It also gives us the fact about lack of enrollment of girls in higher education despite poverty and lack of presidential quota.

Participant 4 Parents know that girls will be given to early marriage and husband will take care about them; thus many fathers don't put any efforts for education of girls. And if boys don't go to school, they will struggle in future.

(Focus group discussion, Teachers, Gharm district)

Participant 5 Currently, girls are going to school up to G9, due to decree signed by our president, on compulsory 9 year education. But many of them will marry, once they reach 16.

(Focus group discussion, Teachers, Gharm district)

From this perspective, education holds little or no significance in the life of girls. The perception that girls are the temporary member of the families has always excluded them from getting education. From the focus group discussion brothers it was revealed that in general families force their son for higher education in comparison to girls.

Participant 6 Many families force their sons to study and ready to sacrifice a lot, in order that son gets higher education.

(Focus group discussion, Brothers, Isfara district)

Participant 1 Actually, there is no much difference between girls and boys. Maybe, boys are raised up as future breadwinners, so they understand better the importance of education.

(Focus group discussion, Brothers, Isfara district)

Religion is also one of the influential forces in Tajik society that is used to support patriarchy. Religious education is one such thing which is sought by families as an alternative education for girls. They are trained by a *bihutan* (a religious teacher) to learn Quran. It offers them with relevant skills for future married life. In all FGDs with parents, they did not mention about religious education perhaps it seemed rewarding to them because it fulfilled the role of providing education as well as skills for marriage. It also seems like they were skeptical on providing information to the outsider on the religious education as it is banned and they might

get into trouble. Brothers' perspective is important because in a way it symbolizes the perspective of whole family. It is what they have seen at home or heard from their friends on the importance of religious education.

Participant 1 Now, in spare time, girls are reading religious books or come together to read holy Quran. Religious education is also important, and I think it is a better option for a girl to have a religious education rather than to get education at school.

(Focus group discussion, Brothers, Isfara district)

As girls attend *bihutan* from a very young age they have a strong religious influence upon them. The following quotations from focus group discussion with teachers reveal the fact about strong religious orientation in families as a reason for girls to drop out from school. Teachers mentioned about the strong influence upon families because they deal with girls from different backgrounds in school and when girls drop out they personally visit their homes to check on the reason for drop out.

Participant 5 Our girls have a strong religious influence, and because of that many girls are not allowed to go to school and are given to marriage as soon as they complete G9.

(Focus group discussion, Teachers, Gharm district)

Religion places certain behavior as honorable and others as shameful. In such traditional society girls respect and dignity comes with conforming to honorable behavior, and families must constantly guard over females' behavior. In such society girls talking to other males outside home puts them into shameful behavior. In most cases, fathers and elders attitude on education was positive only when they could become a doctor or nurse so that the female member of their family do not have to be treated by a male doctor. This quotation was taken from FGD with fathers and elders as it demonstrates the religious influence upon their family dictating roles of girls.

Participant 11 I agree that girls should receive education, particularly medical education. I don't want that women of our village receive help from a man-doctor. We live in a village, and if a man-doctor checks-up our women it might be interpreted wrongly. Besides, it is against laws of Islam. Our girls are not able to receive medical education, thus we don't have woman-doctor in our village.

(Focus Group discussion, Fathers and elders, Isfara district)

Wearing of *hijab* (headscarf) is a symbol of confirming to societal norms backed by religious values. Although there is a ban over wearing of *hijab* to school, parents are traditional and feel it is the way to maintain honor of girls. Not all girls were wearing *hijab* to school but those girls who were wearing it might have a strong religious influence. Other participants like mothers and grandmothers did not mention about wearing of *hijab* nor had problem with school uniform. The following quotation from focus group discussion with drop out girls revealed their perception about educated girls and what they term as disgraceful behavior. From their discussion on the difference between modern and traditional girls one could easily perceive the religious influence upon them as well. During the FGD with drop out girls they were very shy and did not talk freely during the whole session.

Participant 2 Educated girls don't wear headscarf at all, which ends with disgraceful behavior.

(Focus group discussion, Drop out girls, Panj district)

Participant 1 Yes it is, however educated girls have different outlook. They were short sleeve dresses, they behavior is different and modern (stylish clothes and haircuts). Uneducated girls are more traditional because they wear long sleeve dresses and traditional headscarves.

(Focus group discussion, Drop out girls, Panj district)

Male members of the family especially fathers and elders are more concerned about girls self respect and dignity. It may be because they are the protector and guardian of the family in the patriarchal society. They are the ones who are involved in work outside home and have to deal with public while females are confined within the household sphere. So they are held accountable for most of the things outside home. Father, elders and brothers perception revealed

their attitude of insecurity for girls both in terms of conforming to religious values and lack of safety in villages.

The following quotation by fathers and elders demonstrated their perspective on school uniform for girls. The quotation explains father's reluctance to send their daughters to school in a blouse and skirt, as it might be inappropriate and disrespectful towards their cultural norms.

Participant 7 School uniform is another aspect, which should be considered. 2 years ago, school uniform was compulsory; however some parents were against it. They didn't want their daughters to wear blouses and skirts; thus not allowing their daughters to go to school.

(Focus group discussion, Fathers and elders, Isfara district)

Like fathers and elders, brothers were also conservative with their thinking about girls' education. Most families feared sending their daughters to school because of bad rumors which can hamper a girl's honor in the society. The following quotations by brothers demonstrate their way of maintaining the honor of girls in society.

Participant 9 We live in a village and have different life style and view in comparison to urban citizens. People may spread bad rumors, just for a simple greeting. Do you get the point? That's why I have forbidden them to go to school. I promised them to buy anything they need and want, before they get married. Once she (sister) gets married, it will be responsibility of her husband. If she gets married, nobody will reproach us about her behavior, because we are very strict on that.

(Focus group discussion, Brothers, Isfara district)

Participant 1 Our neighbor proposed his daughter to somebody, so she dropped out of school in midterm of G8 and will marry in summer. My cousin dropped out both of his daughters (G8 and G10 respectively). You might know the importance we pay for honor of our families. As of today, it is much better if young girls stay at home, next to their mothers.

(Focus group discussion, Brothers, Isfara district)

5.4. School Factors

With economic crisis, the budget allocated for educational sector was very low. Many of the schools that were destroyed during the civil war have not been taken care of by the government.

This has brought negative consequences on the education system leading to poor quality of education. The poor quality of education that school delivers has created negative image of schools for the family members.

One aspect of poor quality of education is lack of school within girls own locality. It has become problematic for many girls to continue with their education. In many cases girls have to travel outside their village or shift to cities to get higher education. The distance that children have to travel to school is quite long. This has caused many girls to drop out from school after completion of their secondary schooling. The following quotations from focus group discussion with leaders shed light on the education level in existing schools while the other quotation by dropout girls reveal the reason for their lack of participation.

Participant 12 Our main problems that school can't provide complete secondary education. I wish that our school has a capacity to give classes for G10 - G11.
(Focus group discussion, Leaders, Gharm district)

Participant 2 Our school is located far away from area we live in. That is another reason, why do not attend our classes. It takes about 1 hour for us to walk to school.
(Focus group discussion, Drop out girls, Panj district)

On the other side, the increasing number of students has outstripped the supply of school resources because of which these schools are running in three shifts. The following quotations from focus group discussion with leaders and teachers demonstrate that the lack of government support in the construction of classes forced schools to run in different shifts and made it difficult for children to attend school. Leaders and teachers are the only ones concerned about the structural deficiency of school while parents mainly focused on lack of school supplies. In many cases this deficiency has not only become problematic for students but to the teachers themselves to provide proper education to students.

Participant 4 Our school has no facilities for G10-G11. School is designed for 600 children, while current number of schoolchildren is 1700.

(Focus group discussion, Teachers, Isfara district)

Participant 4 We suffer from insufficiency of classes. 420m² of school territory is blocked by houses of different families. Schoolchildren go to school in 3 shifts, while they should go to school in 2 shifts.

(Focus group discussion, Teachers and leaders, Gharm district)

The problem of lack of classes can be attributed to the housing shortage with the increase in population. The problem of housing shortage came with the destruction of houses during the civil war. The government was unable to rebuild all the damaged houses or provide new ones with the deterioration of the economy, so families were forced to seek shelter in areas that were authorized as school territory thus leaving less area for the construction of new classes. In addition a poor classroom facility restricts students' access to good learning environment. The following quotation shows the need for schools to be renovated and also added facilities in classroom for better teaching environment and persistence of girls in schools. As mentioned earlier, FGDs with teachers and leaders focused on the structural factor such as school renovation and classroom facilities to create better environment for teacher and students both to fulfill their respective role.

Participant 5 School needs to be renovated; besides school suffers from insufficiency of inventory.

(Focus group discussion, Teachers and leaders, Istaravshan district)

Participant 12 It would be nice if you could renovate old classrooms and facilities, or even construct new school.

(Focus group discussion, Teachers and leaders, Istaravshan district)

Low salary for teachers is another factor that is keeping girls out of school. Teachers are missing school because most teachers work part time as a seller in market and sometimes raising animals and working in agricultural fields. In days of bazaar they missed going to school and students returned from school early because there was no teacher in the classroom. The

following quotations demonstrate the impact of low salary for teachers on student education. The following quotation from FGD with fathers and elders provides an example of the lack of teachers in school as a result of low salary paid to them which ultimately affects the rate of children going to school.

Participant 2 I agree that teacher must be free of any problems, in order to ensure better education for schoolchildren. If teacher is constantly thinking about additional income, his approach to education will be different; he has to take care about his family.

(Focus group discussion, Fathers and elders, Isfara district)

Another outcome of poor salary is the lack of teachers in school. The following quotation from focus group discussion with fathers and elders clearly demonstrates the lack of teachers in school is a result of poor salary. Lack of teachers in schools has become a particular problem for most parents because their children were not getting proper education in school despite of the huge investment they were making.

Participant 7 They had been shown high respect, but many of them left our village. For the last 4-5 years, we invite teachers from other villages. Nobody would like to in teacher due to many reasons like, low salary, assignment to work in village and etc.

(Focus group discussion, Fathers and elders, Isfara district)

Participant 3 We didn't have good teachers, teachers were missing classes and sending their children to teach us; we did not like this.

(Focus group discussion, Drop out girls, Rasht district)

The persistence of girls in school also depends upon the teaching practices of teachers. Low qualification of teachers has rendered poor teaching practices thus lowering girls' participation from school. From the focus group discussion with fathers and elders it was revealed that girls lack of interest in school was because of poor knowledge of teachers and their teaching skills. The second quotation by brothers focuses on their frustration over the education as a result of teaching practices in school. In all FGD with teachers, they did not mention the unqualified

teacher and low salary for teachers. It might be because a teacher talking about the flaws in their own profession did not seem appropriate. They did not want to demean their profession. Other participants highlighted this factor because despite other personal problem girls were still missing classes.

Participant 2 In the past people were showing high respect to teachers, but not now. People are aware, that many teachers today have low qualification and knowledge.

(Focus group discussion, Fathers and elders, Isfara district)

Participant 11 Many teachers have no teaching skills and proper methodology. They work at the school, due to lack of staff.

(Focus group discussion, Fathers and elders, Isfara district)

Participant 7 I am a brother to two sisters. Both of them go to school. They leave house at 8 a.m. and come back in 2 hours. What kind of education is that? They have very low knowledge; due that teachers don't teach them anything at all.

(Focus group discussion, Brothers, Isfara district)

Corporal punishment of students is a common practice in most schools in Tajikistan. This is rendered upon students for their progress in studies. The punishments are given to students because of incompleteness of homework, bad handwriting and poor reading capability. These punishments do not only give them physical pain but also harm them psychologically. This in turn demoralizes girls from participating in school and also a reason for most girls to drop out from school. The following quotations from focus group discussion with drop out girls reveal some of the classroom violence by teachers. It was only the drop out girls who mentioned about the corporal punishment perhaps because they felt awkward of telling their parents about it. This might be because parents see it as acceptable for the progress of the students without taking in consideration the approach the teachers are taking. Teachers would definitely not talk about this matter because of probability of damage to their reputation.

Participant 1 Teachers beat you, if you are not ready for the class and/or didn't do your homework. Teacher should be changed.

(Focus group discussion, Drop out girls, Rasht district)

Participant 4 I dropped out after G2. I was not a good reader; the teacher didn't want to work with me individually. The teacher beat me up because I couldn't read.

(Focus group discussion, Drop out girls, Rasht district)

Violence by boys in classroom is another reason why girls dropped out of school. Violence in classroom takes place in terms of teasing, verbal abuse, beating and following girls. This has become a concern for most of the parents who feel unsafe of sending their daughters to school. Lack of school authority and teachers control over the behavior of boys forced many parents to stop their daughters from going to school. The following quotations from the focus group discussion and individual interview with drop out girls provide an example of violence in classroom by boys causing girls to drop out.

Participant 4 Boys are teasing and try to approach girls. Sometimes girls stop for this reason. Before G4, there is no issue like this. After G4, there were some cases where boys were following girls.

(Focus group discussion, Drop out girls, Rasht district)

Drop out girl The situation in our school is very bad; boys always try to offend girls. Teachers are absent most of the time, thus creating opportunities for boys; they lock girls at classroom and threaten them with raping, like it happened with me (the threat). This incident happened to me twice, and the second time I have my class teacher and my parents. The Director and class teacher had a talk with the boys - they were told not to do this anymore and then the boy came to ask me why I had told the teacher and the next day I was threatened again.

(Individual interview, Drop out girl, Isfara district)

It was noticed that while girls tend to focus on violence in classroom and fathers and elders, brothers, leaders focus on the violence on their way and back from school. The difference in opinion might be from the fact that parents are less concerned about school violence because when girls are in school it becomes responsibility of teachers and school to keep an eye on this matter. But outside of school becomes their responsibility.

Lack of vocational classes in schools is another factor causing family to stop their girls from going to school. Family expectation of school is whether they get degree or not but if they learn

some skills in school it would provide them with jobs in future and is also beneficial for their marriage prospects. It is also an expectation for girls that they learn some skills at school. The following quotations from focus group discussion demonstrate the expectation of family members to provide girls with vocational classes to encourage girls to go to school. Fathers, elders, mothers and grandmothers were talking mostly about this issue because despite of the poor quality of education they wanted at least girls to receive some skills which could later fetch them a job as well as being suitable from the viewpoint of marriage.

Participant 3 Recently, parents were not allowing girls to continue their education. But now, as some schools have capacity for extracurricular classes (like sewing), more and more parents agree on continuation of education of their daughters.
(Focus group discussion, Mothers, Isfara district)

Participant 6 Girls should be somehow encouraged to go to school. If my granddaughter learns how to sew at school, then she will be interested in education as well.
(Focus group discussion, Grandmothers, Gharm district)

Participant 2 I wish that school administration arranges specialized education like sewing or culinary. It will be a good foundation to train for a good specialist. I wish, that girls learn how to sew, at least clothes for their children.
(Focus group discussion, Fathers and brothers, Gharm district)

Thus, the results from the analysis showed the influence of political and institutional factors on culture, poverty and school issues as a barrier for girls to participate in school. Further, from the analysis a model was created to show the causal effect of each factor on the girls drop out from school.

5.5. Conceptual Model

Based on the analysis, a model was created that shows how different factors-political and institutional factors , poverty, culture, school issues work independently and further its intersection with one another reduces girls' educational participation from school. The model is

described below. It is important to note that different populations spoke about different factors, which is also described in detail below.

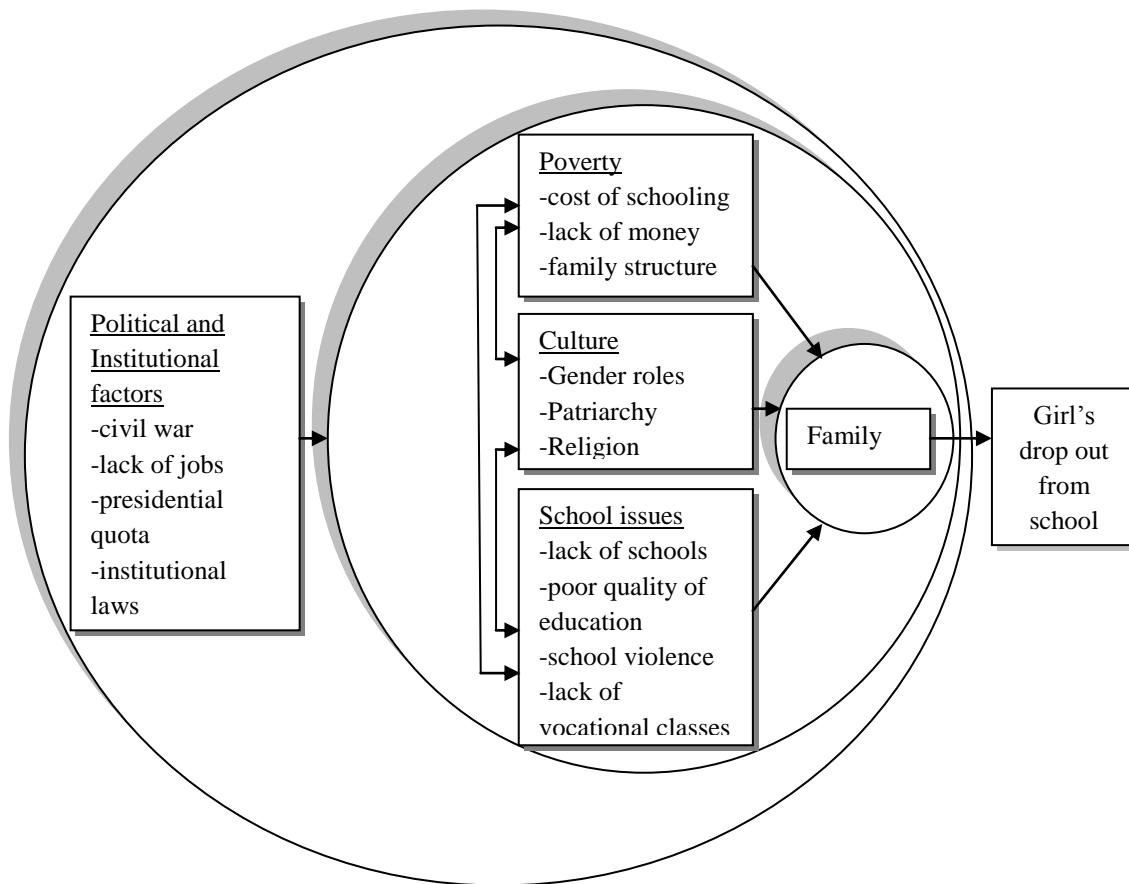


Figure 3 Conceptual model

Figure 3 shows the simultaneous influence of one factor over the other finally leading to girls drop out from school. It is shown by the effect flowing from national level to the community level, from community level to family and finally from family to the individual level. I have chosen this approach based on the analysis to show how at different levels the discrimination is rooted. Further, the pile up of discrimination at each level becomes more pronounced lastly victimizing the individual. In order to analyze the present situation it is very important to identify the layers that have eroded educational participation of girls.

The explanation below provides the conceptual description of a model and the flow of arrow pointing from one to another showing the effect of factors on the girls drop out from school.

In the model, the political and institutional factors are placed in a larger circle in a bracket with four sub-headings which are civil war, lack of jobs, presidential quota and institutional laws. The political and institutional factors work at the national level affecting all the other three factors- poverty, culture and school issues which are shown by an arrow point toward a second circle. In a second circle, there are three factors- poverty, culture and school issues which are placed in their own brackets with sub-headings.

Poverty is observed in terms of cost of schooling, lack of money and family structure. Culture and tradition is observed in terms of gender roles, patriarchy and religion. Further, school issues are observed in terms of lack of schools, poor quality of education, school violence and lack of vocational classes. Poverty, culture and school issues work at the community level. There are many arrows going on through each of these factors. Each of these factors works independently and in relation to each other affecting family life which is shown by arrows pointing from all the three factors to a small circle in which family life is placed.

Family is kept in a small circle because family is that small unit where the decision is made regarding the educational participation of girls. Based on the analysis, most of the families' perspectives regarding girls' educational participation were not positive. Their decisions are largely influenced by the community they belong to. Community is a place where various factors reside and intersect each other and family is the medium through which these factors influence the individual life. Further, these community factors are context specific because the level of drop out from school is not the same throughout the district. Thus differences in communities result from the differences in the factors. Further, the interaction between different factors

creates a situation that disadvantage girls and erode their educational opportunities. Taking Collins argument the intersection of factors such as poverty and culture, and culture and school issues determine where girls are privileged or oppressed. As an oppressed group it denies them the opportunity of education. From a small circle family, there is an arrow point towards a box which is a girls' drop out from school. It is placed outside of the big circle.

Political and institutional factors shape all the other factors like poverty, culture and school issues which in turn shape the family life and leads girls to drop out from school. The disintegration of Soviet Union followed by civil and political unrest brought a massive decline to the country's economy. The war destroyed major agriculture and industrial sector that used to employ large number of Tajik population. Further, textile industry which used to employ high proportion of women was also destroyed during the civil war. Unemployment was high and the handful of industries that existed could not absorb large number of working population. Poverty of families came with no surprise. Unemployment affected both men and women, while women remained secluded from the outside sphere men continued to dominate the sphere. Further, with increasing insecurity in the country families opted not to send their wives or daughters alone outside, so the only way of their safety was confining them to the household. Thus, women became excluded from the public sphere and were concentrated more on the private sphere of household. Insecurity in the country also forced families to marry off their daughters as well as most of the girls started wearing veils to keep them safe. It renewed both the gender roles of girls and religious influence upon families ever widened. This tradition was further fueling the patriarchal tradition in Tajik society.

A significant proportion of school properties were also destroyed during the civil war. With lack of government funding these school were not renovated timely because of which most of

them are still in the same condition. Further, the construction company could build only few schools. Most of the people migrated to other places especially doctors and teachers in search for better opportunities. This ultimately resulted in lack of teachers. Further, with insufficiency of teachers at schools the jobs were mostly given to those who recently graduated or to those who have less knowledge just to fulfill the number of teachers at school. Violence outside home became so common even during the day light. Government could not provide strict eye on the offenders. The institutional laws regarding the years of compulsory education brought no good results for the girls as it opened opportunities for families to decide on the future of girls once they completed their secondary schooling. Further, less presidential quotas for girls could not raise the number of girls in school which brought gender imbalance in the educational sector. Both of these situations confined girls to the household roles or either preparing themselves for marriage. Bribery also became a part for getting presidential quotas in most school thus degrading the quality of schools.

These effects of political and institutional factors on poverty, culture and school issues brought numerous problems. Poverty reduced the spending power of the families' thus further reducing their capability to keep up with the cost of schooling. With lack of money and high cost of schooling covering both the direct and indirect expenses made families' unable to support the education of their daughters. Lack of money in the household also forced families to seek labor of their daughters for the household work so that they can engage themselves in paid work. Further, family structure also restricted the participation of girls at school. Poverty in female headed household and large families was high in comparison to families where both the parents were present. In the former case the female-heads have to work outside to earn money leaving all the household responsibility over the girls that reduced their educational participation and in the

latter case in large families the income was spent primarily on food thus leaving fewer amounts for the education of their daughters.

The legacy of Soviet culture was the practice of traditional culture. This traditional culture created many barriers for girls to participate in schools. Evidence of strong female stereotypes could be observed from all the participants and even from the drop out girls themselves. This stereotype has confined girls to the household work restricting their educational participation. Also, patriarchal tradition in Tajik culture made families to force their son towards higher education while prepare girls for marriage. As girls are temporary members of the family educating them is bearing the burden of unnecessary expenses and even if the girls are given the opportunity to study it will benefit their future husband and not them. Because of this patriarchal tradition, families focus on the education of sons and on the grooming of girls for marriage. When girls drop out from school most families seek religious education as an option to fulfill an education of girls as well as train them for their marriage. Also, the religious influence of families is so strong that sometimes it makes harder for girls to attend school such as wearing of a veil. Even the girls themselves are influenced by religious values and most of the female roles they play seem appropriate for them. Also religion does not forbid girls from marrying at any age despite of the government prescribed legal age of marriage. This all has affected girls' participation from school eventually causing them to drop out.

Most of the school issues that came as a result of political and institutional factors had an impact over the girls' education. Lack of school in their own area forced families to discontinue the education of girls for higher education. The distance to school became long and tedious as well as unsafe for the girls. Further, poor quality of education in terms of lack of teachers, unqualified teachers and poor classroom facilities created frustration among parents and girls

over the learning environment. This created a negative image of school in the eyes of parents ultimately forcing them to stop their daughters from going to school. School violence by teachers and boys also restricted the educational participation of girls. Punishment was often severe which hampered the girls both physically and mentally while boys violence was teasing, verbal abuse, passing negative comments etc. made girls feel insecure of the environment. Unable to cope with the school violence families' were reluctant to send their daughters to school.

However, the multiple intersections between poverty, culture and school issues further erode the educational participation of girls. Poverty and culture both reinforce each other. Poverty of families forced girls to stay at home and do the household chores making their gender role more defined while culture helped parents to decide on the choice of girls for household work because the work is perceived to be the female's role. Poor families always outweigh the return they would get by investing upon son and daughter. Here also, the traditional culture determines which gender to select for further education and which one to refrain, and girls are always disadvantage over this case because in patriarchy son preference is high. Thus, families' way of solving their financial difficulties is unknowingly giving continuity to the traditional culture, patriarchy. Further, cultural practices that erode the educational participation of girls' brought poverty in many families. So, in both the cases the intersection of factors are creating disadvantage situation for girls to drop out from school.

Likewise the interaction between culture and school issues can also be perceived. This is evident from the choice of subjects that families wanted their daughters to study such as cooking, sewing, nursing etc. which were beneficial from their marriage perspective. Most of the families preferred to send their daughters to school only if the school provided training in these courses. The family choice of subject selection is actually reinforcing their gender roles. Further, the

traditional culture hindered many girls to participate in school because of the possible violence inflicted upon them, because their religion demands the honor of girls to be maintained throughout their lifetime. It is not only the physical pain and mental torture of the violence but also loosing of honor of families if they do not confirm to the traditional cultural practices. The intersection of both of these factors hinges on the girls' ability to participate in school.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

Based on my own background and the findings from Tajikistan, political and institutional factors, poverty, culture and school factors, all work in a similar way creating the barriers for educational participation of girls. When talking about the similarities the findings showed that girls' drop out from school must be perceived in terms of the historical context of political and institutional factor in both countries. In Tajikistan, the collapse of the Soviet Union followed by periods of political turmoil brought no good results for them. A sharp economic decline resulting in poverty and widening gender gap was perceived in the educational sector reducing educational opportunities for girls. In Nepal, the Maoist civil war brought massive destruction to the country's economy together with widespread poverty limiting resources in families to send their daughters to school. Further in both countries the school factors are similar with most of the issues concerning school violence, poor quality of schooling, lack of schools and lack of vocational classes. The legacy of Soviet traditional culture and practices still exists in Tajik society which erodes the educational opportunities of girls. The gender disparity in education is because of the Tajik traditional culture where girls are confined to private sphere of the household. In Nepal, the feudal system, although it has been abolished, is responsible for the continuity of traditional culture and practices, and vast gender discrimination. These all have been shaped by the patriarchal tradition in Nepal and the legal system which follows the patriarchal tradition. However in Tajikistan religion is a very influential factor that is continuously fueling the patriarchal tradition creating situation for girls to drop out from school.

It was evident from the second chapter on literature review that countries which went through civil war and political turmoil at a particular point in time decreased the chances of girls' educational opportunity. Poverty along with traditional culture was the root cause for girls to

drop out from school. Child labor in form of paid work was an alternative solution for most families to alleviate poverty. Although most unpaid such as household chores were done by girls they nonetheless participated in paid work also which was not found from the study analysis. This was evident from the study and was confirmed by a study done in South Asia. Early marriages took place firstly because of patriarchal tradition which gives strong preference to sons as they are the ones to take care of the parents in future, and daughters are the ones to be married off early. Also, the studies affirmed a positive relationship between education and late marriage of girls. Schooling was regarded as an obstruction towards girls' marriage as education provides them with decisions over their spouse and career choices. School issues from other countries being similar to Tajikistan showed the evidence of poor quality of schooling, lack of teachers, insufficient schools and school violence. Further, the studies also showed the evidence of interaction of gender with poverty and gender with school issues creating a disadvantaged situation for girls to drop out from school.

In Tajikistan, poverty has caused girls to drop out of school. Many families do not have sufficient money to cover the school expenses. Although basic education is free, families still have to cover expenses related to textbooks and school uniform. Indirect cost in terms of school uniform has been one of the single most important factors keeping girls' out of school.

Grandmothers, mothers and drop out girls all mentioned about school uniform as a reason for lack of girls' participation in schools. Girls' probability of educational participation is less in large families and female-headed households. Dropouts mainly came from those families that had poor living condition. For example, in Tajikistan the communities that suffered most during the civil war have high levels of poverty. It was revealed from the study that participants from Qabodiyon district have poor living condition as compared to participants from other

communities. This might be one reason why the participants constantly discussed the issue of poverty as the single most important factor for girls to drop out from school.

Further, domestic work is another important factor creating barriers for girls' to attend schools. In many households, parents need the labor of their daughters for domestic work in periods of financial crisis at home. It was observed that boys were also not an exception in this case who worked outside of home for paid work. But, it was interesting to see the choice of gender for work. Girls engaged themselves in unpaid work at home while boys in paid work outside. This reflects on how gender stereotypes are promoted by families. This is further determined by the traditional cultural practices that determine the role of men and women in society. Although at the surface poverty seems to be a major factor for the withdrawal of girls from school but when it intersects with culture, it determines the choices of work for each gender. The traditional cultural factor working beneath the drop out is because household work is gendered as female. Thus, families' strong religious influence such as the wearing of veil or early marriage hindered girls' from going to school.

It was interesting to see that the decision regarding which child should refrain from school for domestic work came from the mothers and grandmothers. Although grandmothers and mothers belong to an oppressed group in opposition to the male members of the household, they are simultaneously an oppressor in another context. Taking Collins (1990) argument on matrix of domination, the system of domination is not always top-down but are also perpetuated by members at the bottom annexing their power to meet their ends.

In addition, the choice of gender for work by families also depends on the lack of government strict rules to create a safer environment for its people. This is another reason for parents' reluctance to send girls to school. The families' fear of insecurity forced them towards

the early marriages of their daughters. On the other side, their reluctance also came from their religious influence. Religion is a strong force in Tajikistan guiding the community and family life. Most of the societal norms are guided by religion. Wearing of a *hijab* (veil) or wearing clothes that are not fitting to body by girls is an acceptable behavior because that is what is thought to be maintaining girls' honor in society. As family dignity is largely based on maintaining girls' honor, it becomes necessary for families to conform to these norms. Gender roles together with patriarchal tradition followed by strong religious influence of families acted as a barrier for girls' to attend school.

Fathers and brothers conformity to these norms are beneficial because it provides safety for girls as well as their conformity to religious values. Another side to this conformity also comes from their role as a protector in patriarchal society. They conform to the religious values because they are the ones who have to deal with issues outside home, and also in patriarchal society the responsibilities of males are providing economic security and safety to their families. Thus, intersection of political context with religion and patriarchy further created an unfavorable situation for girls to participate in schools. This is also why fathers and brothers particularly focused on the issue of lack of safety for girls outside home as a reason for drop out. Similarly, brothers from Isfara district were more conservative from the rest of the participants with regard to girls' education. Their discussion showed evidence of strong female stereotype such as household work and early marriage. This may be because the community was small and rumors can spread easily in small community. The only approach to guard the honor of female member in the community was either by confining themselves to household chores or early marriage.

The persistence of girls in school also depends upon the school factors. Dilapidated buildings, lack of schools, poor quality of education, school violence and lack of vocational

classes all created barriers for girls to receive a proper education. Lack of schools in its own community imposed a halt on girls' access to higher education while poor classroom facilities and low salary for teachers rendered a poor quality of education to girls. Further, poor salary for teachers also created frustration among teachers for their poor living condition and low social status in society. These not only reduced girls' participation from schools but also brought a negative image of schools in the eyes of parents with regard to producing an efficient manpower. Also, for parents lack of vocational classes in schools did not guarantee a secured future for girls in terms of job opportunities. It was the need for fathers, brothers, grandmothers and mothers to replace some of the compulsory classes with vocational courses. This may be one reason why girls are often steered from the technical subjects. Further, government also provides presidential quotas for girls who choose subjects like cooking, sewing, etc. Both the government and the family's choice of subject selection are influencing the female stereotypes. Violence in school is another factor keeping girls out of schools.

Violence in school was observed by girls in terms of corporal punishment by teachers and harassment by boys. It was the drop out girls with the exception of one mother who talked about violence in school. Fathers and elders did not mention school violence because when girls are in schools it becomes responsibility of school administration and teachers to take care of them. School violence was a last topic of discussion among leaders, teachers, fathers and elders centered their discussion on the political issue and job opportunities for girls.

Thus, we see that the existence of these problems have not only caused girls to drop out from school but has also created vast gender discrimination in society. Thus, the community and family needs to aware of the negative implications of many widely accepted traditional practices that are creating gender disparity.

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